

# **Keeping Europe in Order**

**Conservative International Political Thought in Victorian Britain, 1854-1880**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby confirm that all work presented below is my own except where indicated.

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## **Abstract**

Conservative international thought in Victorian Britain is a prominent landmark in the landscape of international thought which has up to now gone unmapped. In illuminating this body of thought, the thesis addresses weaknesses present in three different historiographies. As the first detailed study of conservative international thought in Victorian Britain, the thesis rectifies a marked bias in Victorian intellectual history towards the study of liberal and radical thought. Furthermore, by analysing the political thought of major representatives of the conservative educated classes, this thesis provides context for the history of conservative high politics, thereby leading us to view these in a different light. Finally, this study, by providing a historically nuanced account of the evolution of major themes of international relations theory in mid-Victorian Britain, functions as a corrective to the self-history of the academic field of International Relations. The thesis makes its argument by analysing conservative contributions in periodicals, pamphlets, and newspapers to British public debates on international affairs, from the Crimean War (1854-56) until the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-80. The general claim of this thesis is that there existed a distinctly conservative perspective on the international sphere. The core elements of this conservative perspective were the primacy of statesmen in setting foreign policy; of interests, military force, and stature in determining the course of international politics; and of order and equilibrium as its normative content. Conservative authors used this constellation of ideas in the major debates of the mid-Victorian era on international affairs, both as a means to make sense of events, and as a counterpoint to liberal narratives – with which Victorian international thought is all too often identified. In recovering the international political thought of Victorian conservatives, this thesis illuminates an important but neglected aspect of how international relations were understood and conceptualised in mid-Victorian Britain.

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## Introduction

This thesis is a project to recover the international political thought of a wide variety of opinion-formers among Victorian conservatives. The scholarship in the history of political thought and in the history of international relations have respectively focused mainly on the early modern era and the 20th century. More recent studies which do treat Victorian international thought have mainly investigated liberals and radicals. This neglect of the conservative perspective on international affairs has persisted despite the vital importance of conservatism in Victorian political life.<sup>1</sup> Conservative international thought in Victorian Britain is a prominent landmark in the landscape of international thought which has up to now gone unexplored and unmapped.

The general claim of this thesis is that there existed a distinctly conservative outlook on international relations in Victorian Britain. Conservative authors themselves explicitly presented their perspective on international relations as an alternative to the liberal narrative of progress through the spread of constitutional liberty and national self-determination. It is these latter principles, however, with which Victorian international thought is all too often identified. The core elements of the conservative perspective were the primacy of statesmen in setting foreign policy; of interests, military force, and stature in determining the course of international politics; and of order and equilibrium as its normative content. Conservative authors used this constellation of ideas in the major debates of the mid-Victorian era on international affairs, both as a means to make sense of events, and as a counterpoint to liberal invocations of the public and the national community; of justice and universal morality; and of the progress of civilisation.

The argument of this thesis is based on the analysis of conservative contributions to public debates on international affairs in mid-Victorian Britain, from around 1854 to around 1880. The exact character of international politics was a topic of major contemporary significance in mid-Victorian Britain. These decades saw a perpetual struggle between liberals and conservatives. The question at stake was, were British interests best served by effecting a general progress of civilisation, or by keeping Europe in order? These debates on international affairs were also intertwined with debates on major domestic issues, most notably on popular influence on government, economy of government, and the character of the British polity. Conservative thought

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<sup>1</sup> One of the two main political parties called itself “Conservative”, and lower-case conservatism was even more widespread. See Blake (1970: 93-94).

on international affairs is then also part of the story of how conservatives reacted intellectually to several major trends of the Victorian era, namely the increasing democratisation of politics, the rapid advance of technology, and the spread of national consciousness. Conservative commentators drew upon their theory of international relations in order to argue either against the affirmation of these trends or for Britain to take certain actions to cope with these changes.

## Method

The thesis focuses on the nexus of three areas which have in particular been unjustly neglected in the literature: it studies Victorian international political thought, rather than the more extensively covered early modern and 20th century thought; it investigates the writings of opinion-formers among the conservative educated classes, rather than liberals and radicals or eminent conservative politicians; and it analyses their conceptualisations of the European international sphere, rather than focusing on empire. The paragraphs below explain how the thesis is demarcated along its various dimensions.

### The conservative dimension

How does this thesis recover those works and arguments which were part of the *conservative* tradition of political thought? Firstly, the thesis approaches the conservative tradition through its social reality, its existence as a political movement, as opposed to through its theoretical structure.<sup>2</sup> This thesis thus adopts the position that conservative international thought is the thought of conservatives on international affairs, with no *a priori* criteria regarding the substance of this thought.<sup>3</sup> The thesis uses both self-identification and party affiliation to identify conservative thinkers. This establishes a body of mainstream conservatives. The contextualist scholarship on Victorian liberal political thought generally recovers a sense of what *liberal* thought entailed through the identification of those concepts, beliefs, and commitments which were widely shared

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<sup>2</sup> This distinction is made by Geuss, when he argues that "liberalism" refers both to a relatively abstract theoretical structure – a collection of characteristic arguments, ideals, values, concepts – and to a social reality, a political movement that is at least partly institutionalised in organised parties' (Geuss 2002: 322; see also Bell 2007c: 8). Put in the terms used by Bell (2014: 3-4), this is an *explanatory* and *comprehensive* rather than *prescriptive* account of conservative thought, using a *contextual* rather than *stipulative* or *canonical* approach. The study of canonical authors or politicians, while common in studies of conservatism, would be 'a defective foundation on which to build an analysis of a tradition', and especially of the conservative tradition, where the canonical figures are 'in many ways untypical of conservatives generally' (Bell 2014: 5); (Pearson and Williams 1984: 72).

<sup>3</sup> This approach is also used by Sylvest, in his book on liberal internationalism (2009).



among ‘self-proclaimed liberals’.<sup>4</sup> This thesis too adopts this approach, and the second move consequently entails identifying the political thought shared by the field of mainstream conservatives.

Analysis of the thought of self-identified conservatives makes clear that they held commitments which were also positionally conservative. The positional approach identifies conservatism through its taking of a particular position within societal debates on institutional change – one which aims to prevent wholesale changes to those institutions necessary to uphold the existing order, in reaction to calls for change by progressives or radicals.<sup>5</sup> The conservative body of thought is consequently placed in the context of the conservatives’ imagined interlocutors. The thesis thereby recovers those arguments, notions, and perspectives which commentators presented as the conservative alternative to liberal and radical views.

The two methodological moves above already result in a substantive account of conservative thought. The third move expands the analysis beyond this body of mainstream conservative thought, by investigating to what extent the themes of conservative thought were drawn upon by Whigs and “hard-headed” liberals, who were more ambiguously related to Victorian conservatism.<sup>6</sup> It thereby analyses what was distinctive about the thought of conservatives. Through employing these methodological moves, the thesis offers an account of Victorian conservative international political thought which is wide-ranging and inclusive, allowing for conservatism to manifest itself in different contexts and different vocabularies.

### The international dimension

How does this thesis demarcate the international? Least problematically, international thought entails thought on inter-state relations. Another possible facet of international thought would be thought on transnational affairs – thought on trends or events which

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<sup>4</sup> Bell (2014: 7). See e.g. Bell and Sylvest (2007); Bellamy (1990); Burrow (1988); Fontana (1990); Sylvest (2009).

<sup>5</sup> This understanding of conservatism as “positional” is endorsed by several major scholars of conservatism. See Freedman (1996: 329-331); Huntington (1957: 455); Mannheim (1986: 83-84). In addition, a positional understanding of conservatism is compatible with the thought of contemporary conservatives on their role in society. For two important twentieth-century conservative thinkers, see Scruton (1980: 11-15, 19, 22) and Oakeshott (1962 [1991]: 407-410). For Victorian conservatives: On Peel, see Gash (1977: 83); Fontana (1990: 52). On Disraeli, see Blake (1998: 278-9); Jenkins (1996: 140); Parry (2007: 29-30). On Robert Cecil, Marquess of Salisbury, see Bentley (2001: 20, 27, 31); Cecil (1883); Pinto-Duchinsky (1967: 80); Stewart (1987: 98). On the 14th Earl of Derby, see Greenleaf (1983: 191-2); Hawkins (2007: 23-5, 59). On Churchill, see Quinault (1979: 143, 164). On Balfour, see Adams (2007: 60-1). See also Greg (1883: 701); Keble (1883: 689); Lecky (1896: 210-1).

<sup>6</sup> See the chapter on “Liminal figures” and its outline below.

transcend the domestic sphere, but which do not revolve around the interaction between states. This is a valid area of investigation, but little commented upon by conservatives during the time period under investigation – inter-state relations loomed far larger for them. A more potentially problematic issue is the thought on empire. Edward Keene has argued that the nineteenth century saw two international orders: a European sovereign state system which was to secure toleration and stability, and an extra-European order which aimed to realise the progress of civilisation, in which actors' sovereignty was divisible.<sup>7</sup> Keene also notes how many international lawyers at the time considered empire as part of the sphere of constitutional rather than international law.<sup>8</sup> Both points apply, to a certain extent, to Victorian conservatives. They indeed understood empire as a distinct sphere, not reducible to the logic and categories of either the domestic or international sphere, but incorporating elements of both (e.g. a formal, hierarchical relationship between Britain and the colonies, in contrast with the relationship between states, but at the same time the possibility of a more adversarial relationship between colonial and British governments than was ever assumed within the government structure of Britain). Recovering conservative political thought on empire and on European international relations are consequently two different scholarly endeavours.

This thesis concerns itself with thought on European international politics, because Europe was the facet of the global order which loomed largest in conservative thought. There were far more articles on European international politics in the conservative *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine* than on other international issues. Even when the focus of debates shifted towards colonial and imperial matters from the early eighties onward, commentators still generally framed these in the context of European politics. While the focus of scholarship in intellectual history on the political thought on empire is understandable considering present-day priorities and interests, for a representative history of Victorian international thought we do need to attend more to Victorian thought on Europe. Reflecting the emphasis and priorities of the subjects of this research project, the international thought studied is thus primarily thought on inter-state affairs in Europe and, briefly, North America.

### The Victorian conservative dimension

The thesis makes its argument by analysing conservative contributions to public debates

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<sup>7</sup> Keene (2002); (2009: 119).

on international affairs. Public debate in Victorian Britain revolved around newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, and Parliament.<sup>9</sup> Of these, periodical articles best represent the general features of the intellectual landscape and most embed their arguments in a framework of political thought.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, this thesis focuses primarily on conservative periodicals and, where warranted, newspapers and pamphlets.<sup>11</sup> The thesis focuses on authors and articles from that subset of periodicals which were high-calibre, not merely aiming to entertain, which focused on current affairs and politics rather than literary criticism, and which had a conservative editorial slant.<sup>12</sup> These venues were an outlet for the perspectives of a particular subset of conservative Victorian Britain – the educated, articulate, mostly metropolitan, upper middle class.<sup>13</sup> The thesis consequently investigates the class of conservative educated commentators, rather than eminent conservative politicians.<sup>14</sup> That said, the conservative authors in these periodicals often identified explicitly with the Conservative party and Conservative parliamentarians –

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<sup>8</sup> Keene (2002: kindle loc. 1378).

<sup>9</sup> Collini (1991: 51-6); Gambles (1999: 10-11, 18); Houghton (1983: 10-13, 18).

<sup>10</sup> Newspaper articles played a role in shaping and representing public opinion, but are not a particularly suitable focus for a study of political thought, since, as Gambles notes, 'daily and weekly newspapers were chiefly concerned to 'report' news. ... reviews and magazines and pamphlets provided the lengthy analysis which newspapers could not offer' (Gambles 1999: 18).

In privileging periodicals and pamphlets over debates in Parliament, the thesis follows the approach used in much of the literature on Victorian political thought. See e.g. Bell (2007b); Burrow (1970); (1988); Collini (1991); Jones (2000); Varouxakis (2002). Furthermore, <sup>1010</sup> when Conservative politicians were in opposition, and their rhetorical position did not imply any actual policy commitments, their <sup>1010</sup> positions taken in Parliament were often motivated at least as much by what would gain them party-political advantage as by what they thought would be the best course of action for Britain. See e.g. the argument in Hicks (2007: 151-2, 160, 163). Finally, a case study of the Parliamentary debates on the Eastern Question crisis (1876-78) - when the Conservatives were in government - proved that while including Parliamentary debates would add significantly to the number of references, it would not substantially change the content or conclusions of the analysis.

<sup>11</sup> In particular, the Black Sea affair was of such an ephemeral nature (consisting mainly of a war-scare during two weeks in November 1870), that it made little impact in the periodicals. Consequently, the analysis of this debate mostly rests on the leaders of *The Standard* and *The Globe*, at the time the only two unambiguously conservative newspapers among the 'preponderantly Liberal ... metropolitan press' (Koss 1981: 198, see also 150, 183).

<sup>12</sup> See for these distinctions Collini (1991: 51-54); Gambles (1999: 10-11, 18); Houghton (1983: 10-13, 18). The two pre-eminent periodicals with an explicitly conservative editorial slant were the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*. The *Saturday Review*, *Fraser's Magazine*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, and the *National Review* also at various times adopted a conservative editorial line. There also existed a class of periodicals specifically about foreign affairs. These last are not fruitful for the purposes of this thesis – they aimed to inform their readers regarding developments abroad, and their articles were consequently often written by foreigners. See the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* for more information.

<sup>13</sup> See Collini (1991: 29); Houghton (1983: 7-8). These authors themselves, too, distinguished their conservatism, based in a reasoned reflection on experience and knowledge gained, from the popular conservatism of the masses, which they saw as based in passion and emotion, and consequently both too absolute in the moment and too changeable over time. See e.g. Cecil (1871: 272-3); Chesney (1871: 450-3).

<sup>14</sup> The world-views current among the conservative educated classes, rather than those held by particular eminent politicians, is an aspect of conservatism which has received relatively little attention in scholarship on the subject. At the same time, it is the facet of conservatism most suitable for a study of conservative political thought. Green (2002: 3, 16) for instance also 'stress[ed] the importance of the

one author referred to the latter as 'our people' – and moreover assumed that their readers did so too.<sup>15</sup>

The conservatives studied in the dissertation were not exhaustive of the conservatism of the time.<sup>16</sup> The use of “conservatives” in the text consequently refers to that slice of the conservative educated classes which is explored in this study. Moreover, while the body of the dissertation uses the terms “conservative” and “liberal”, this is done for the sake of readability – there is no wish to posit a stark liberal-conservative binary. The distinction between liberals and conservatives used does, however, mirror the divide which authors of the time perceived.

To understand conservative authors' perspectives on international relations, it is important to note what positions they were arguing against, what alternative perspectives they hoped their audience would not adopt. Conservatives saw themselves as participants in a debate and a policy-making process in which statesmen acted either from liberal and radical principles and advice, or from a conservative world-view. Most conservatives made little effort to distinguish between different strands of liberal thought and to address these separately. Figures such as Russell, Gladstone, and Cobden were treated as more or less interchangeable. Conservative commentators were concerned first of all with influencing Britain's foreign policy. They consequently primarily addressed politicians, most notably Gladstone, rather than liberal and radical thinkers. The conservatives' theory of international politics was set off not against detailed, actual liberal positions, but more against an amorphous collection of all the particularly disquieting elements which were part of the various progressive narratives present in contemporary British debate.<sup>17</sup>

This thesis aims to illuminate the articulation of conservative international

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'middlebrow' in Conservative thought'.

<sup>15</sup> (Gleig 1866: 641). The conservative authors studied include politicians, statesmen, and diplomats; scholars, editors, and writers; and members of the professions and military officers. The professions and military provided particularly prolific contributors. Politicians and statesmen generally published a limited number of articles, with Robert Cecil being a major exception. Finally, the writers and scholars, such as Laurence Oliphant, often wrote articles drawing on their specialised knowledge and took relatively idiosyncratic approaches to the subject matter. For the major contributors brief biographical details are given in a footnote the first time they are mentioned.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, these authors generally condemned invasion scares and jingoism as based on fervent emotion rather than reasoned consideration. See e.g. Cecil (1859: 29); Cowell (1878c: 386); Hamley (1878b: 244). On jingoism and popular support for the Conservative government in the late 1870s, see Jenkins (1996: 124-5); Parry (2007: 102-3).

<sup>17</sup> Conservatives indulged in no significant consideration of intermediate positions or possibilities. This view was too Manichean and not a correct reflection of the actual intellectual landscape of the time. For British liberals taking moderate positions of the kind ignored by conservative commentators, see e.g. Beales (1961: 93-97); Jones (2000: 73, 108-9); Parry (2006: 227-229, 278-81, 323-333); Shannon (1963, especially 207).

thought in Victorian Britain. It discusses liberal thought only as part of the context of conservative arguments, which were arranged against it. The discussions of liberal perspectives consequently reveal how conservatives characterised their interlocutors, but, as noted above, should not be taken as a representative account of liberal and radical Victorian international thought.<sup>18</sup> This thesis situates conservative thought in the wider intellectual landscape of the time. The main chapters of the thesis also present the positions which conservatives imputed to their opponents. The final two chapters analyse both how conservatives coped with the radical principle of nationality and how conservative themes and tropes manifested themselves in the thought of Whigs and “hard-headed” liberals, groups liminal to Victorian conservatism.

### The political thought dimension

Political thought contains both an ontology of the political reality and a normative framework which is applied to this reality. 'Ontology', Colin Hay states, determines the 'categories of actors, mechanisms, or processes to which legitimate appeal can be made', and it entails the answers to questions such as 'what are the constituents of the polity' (or of the international sphere); 'what kinds of general principles govern its functioning'; 'what drives political actors'; and more such.<sup>19</sup> This thesis investigates which answers conservatives gave to these questions regarding the international sphere, and which categories of actors, mechanisms, and processes they discerned. Conservatives' normative commitments were deeply interwoven with their ontology. Where the ontology opened up space for normative commitments, the ethical implications of the ontological distinctions being made will be noted. Often, where conservatives' normative commitments were essentially an affirmation of the status quo, the prescriptive and descriptive elements of an argument could be all but indistinguishable. Among all the ontological and normative commitments made by conservatives, this thesis recovers those themes and tropes which recurred among different authors and different debates, which were used repeatedly to deal with a particular class of situation. For the purposes of this thesis, a unit of political thought is then a concept or a notion, deployed and given meaning in particular context(s).

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<sup>18</sup> For instructive accounts of liberal and radical thought which could profitably be read alongside this thesis, see e.g. Claeys (2010); Parry (2006); Sylvest (2009a); Taylor (1957); Varouxakis (2006b).

<sup>19</sup> Hay (2006: 78-81).

### Subject matter

The approach used in this thesis is based on existing perspectives within the field of the history of political thought. Skinner assumes 'that political life itself sets the main problems for the political theorist, causing a certain range of issues to appear problematic, and a corresponding range of questions to become the leading subjects of debate'.<sup>20</sup> Certain perceived crises and problematic trends, as present in the political sphere, galvanise various thinkers into trying to cope with them, thereby giving rise to debate. The focus is here not on policy alternatives, but on the issue(s) which made policy necessary in the first place. Political theory helped determine what events and trends were perceived as crises and as problematic, while political theory was then also drawn upon and possibly modified in order to cope adequately with these crises and trends. Political thought evolved as a result of people reacting to trends or crises with which the existing theoretical framework could not deal satisfactorily. So it is 'the polemics and controversies of the day ... [which] provide the first indication of what should be studied'.<sup>21</sup> Focus should thus be on the main debates of a period; on the perceived crises and problematic trends which galvanised or were involved with these debates; and finally on the themes and tropes in political thought which these thinkers drew upon and reconfigured in order for them to be able to cope satisfactorily with these crises and trends.

This thesis covers the main debates on international affairs in Britain in the mid-Victorian period, from 1854 to 1880. The episodes in European politics which elicited most comment from conservatives were the Crimean War (1854-56), the unification of Italy (1858-61), the unification of Germany, especially the Danish Duchies affair (1864) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), and the Black Sea affair (1870-71) and Eastern Question crisis (1876-78).<sup>22</sup> In addition, the US Civil War (1861-65) occasioned much debate in Britain, not least as a major event in international politics. The Conservative party was in opposition for most of these years; the Conservatives were in government only as a minority government in the early stages of the unification of Italy (1858-59) and, pre-occupied with Reform, between 1866 and 1868, and as a majority government during the Eastern Question crisis of 1874-80.

The thesis covers this timespan because there are strong reasons to include all

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<sup>20</sup> Skinner (1978: xi). See also Palonen (2005).

<sup>21</sup> Palonen (2005: 356).

<sup>22</sup> Parry (2006: 1) mentions that, for liberals, these same episodes were the mid-Victorian 'European events that had the most important political ramifications at home'. The main features of each episode are briefly discussed in a footnote when the affair is first treated substantially.

the years from 1854 to 1880. Most major events in international relations of the era fall in these decades: the great-power wars (Crimean, Franco-Austrian, Austro-Prussian, and Franco-Prussian), the unifications of Italy and Germany, the US civil war, and several manifestations of the Eastern Question. In addition, studying debates from the Crimean War until the Eastern Question crisis of the 1870s also shows the whole arc of how conservatives coped with the rise of the principle of nationality and demise of the Treaty of Vienna, one of the major themes running throughout their commentary.

At the same time, there is little reason for taking an even wider scope. In the earlier years of the Victorian period, domestic affairs were the focus of national debate. Even the 1848 revolutions were mostly discussed in the context of their putative implications for Britain's domestic institutions.<sup>23</sup> From the 1880s onward, empire became more prominent, both in various major imperial projects and in the issue of Irish home rule. It was the mid-Victorian period which saw international politics take centre stage.

### Historiographies

Most of the scholarship on Britain and mid-Victorian international relations concerns itself with the *high politics* of the time, focusing either on international diplomacy or on the domestic politics surrounding the setting of foreign policy in Britain.<sup>24</sup> This thesis recovers from obscurity conservative Victorian *thought* on international affairs. In illuminating this body of thought, the thesis addresses weaknesses in three different historiographies, namely those of Victorian political thought, of Victorian conservatism, and of international relations theory.

Conservative positions played a prominent role in Victorian debates on Britain's international affairs but have been underrepresented in established scholarship. The literature on Victorian international political thought has overwhelmingly focused on liberal and radical perspectives, conservatives having been overlooked.<sup>25</sup> The existing

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<sup>23</sup> The only debate before this date which might have warranted inclusion was the Don Pacifico debate, which partly revolved around the duty of statesmen in international affairs; this was however first of all a debate between different strands of the liberal and radical family.

<sup>24</sup> See on the Crimean War: Baumgart (1981); Clayton (1971); Conacher (1987); Cunningham (1993); Hoard (1974); Lambert (1991); Martin (1924); Mosse (1963); Schroeder (1972); Seton-Watson (1937); Wilson (1987). On the unification of Italy: Beales and Biagini (2002); Beales (1961) and Urban (1938); Hicks (2007); McIntire (1983); Read (1922); Taylor (1936); Temperley and Penson (1938). On the unification of Germany: Bourne (1970); Howard (1969); Millman (1965); Mosse (1958); Mulligan (2011); Raymond (1921); Sandiford (1975); Swartz (1985); Wilson (1987). On the Eastern Question crisis: Aldous (2006); Bourne (1970); Clayton (1971); Cunningham (1993); Medlicott (1963); Millman (1979); Rolo (1987); Seton-Watson (1972); Swartz (1985).

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Bell (2007a); (2007b); (2010); Bell and Sylvest (2006); Claeys (2010); Harvie (1976); Kent (1978);

scholarship on the Victorian educated classes generally also focuses foremost on liberals and radicals; the main contextualist studies of the Victorian 'public moralists' and their milieu structure their work around the various strands of liberal and radical thought.<sup>26</sup> This thesis consequently first of all rectifies a marked bias in Victorian intellectual history towards the study of liberal and radical thought, and thereby contributes to a fuller historical appreciation of the broad range of ideological positions which made up the Victorian intellectual landscape.

Secondly, in its focus on commentary on European international relations, the thesis reflects the emphases which its subjects placed in their writings on international affairs. The usual focus of studies in the history of international political thought is on empire. This thesis asserts that, especially in mid-Victorian Britain, international thought was first of all thought on European (and for a time American) affairs.<sup>27</sup>

Thirdly, the project suggests an approach to the history of political thought different from that dominant in the field. Rather than focusing on individual thinkers, usually eminent philosophers, this study aims to recover the thought of general groups and movements in a particular society. Subjects are chosen not for their intrinsic, philosophical interest, but because they are historically representative, because insight into their work helps us to recover the ways in which their society understood the world.<sup>28</sup>

Studies of Victorian conservatism focus primarily on party politics and the roles played by prominent politicians in determining foreign policy. While insightful, these works generally do not probe deeply into the political thought and conceptual reasoning behind certain policy preferences.<sup>29</sup> There is some research which touches on conservative thought regarding international affairs, but merely as part of a biographical effort,<sup>30</sup> in the context of party-political history,<sup>31</sup> or as a part of a more general study of

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Mehta (1999); Parry (2006); Pitts (2005); Porter (1984); Rudman (1940); Schreuder (1978); Schroeder (1980); Semmel (1986); Shannon (1963); Sylvest (2009); Varouxakis (2002a); (2002b); (2006). A recent edited work on 'Victorian visions of global order', Bell (2007a), includes chapters on liberal and radical perspectives, but lacks one on conservative thought. See also Bell (2006: 295).

<sup>26</sup> The only conservatives generally included are those who overlap with progressives on policy or principle; Peelites in the early Victorian era and Maine, Dicey and other "disillusioned liberals" later on in the century. See e.g. Burrow (1970; 1988); Collini (1991); Collini, Winch, and Burrow (1983); Mandler (2000); (2006a) – who also considers Disraeli and Salisbury – and Stapleton (2000); (2001).

<sup>27</sup> The future of the settler colonies, debated throughout these decades, was generally framed as an intra-British constitutional and political issue. See e.g. Bell (2007b).

<sup>28</sup> See also Bell (2014: 5); Keene (2005: 15-6).

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. Blake (1970); Hicks (2007); Jenkins (1996); Parry (2007); Southgate (1974); Steele (1999); Wilson (1987); see also Parry (1983: 470).

<sup>30</sup> Bentley (2001); Grenville (1964); Hawkins (2007); Hicks (2011); Knox (1998); Parry (2007); Smith (1972); Taylor (1975).



conservative politics and ideology.<sup>32</sup> Contributing to the study of political ideologies, the thesis reveals how certain themes and tropes of the conservative intellectual heritage, such as a concern for stability and order and an emphasis on hierarchy and deference, manifested themselves in Victorian international thought. Moreover, looking at conservative thought and writings more generally illuminates events and positions in high politics, placing them in a different context and thereby leading us to interpret them in a different light.<sup>33</sup>

The history of international relations theory, finally, is overwhelmingly focused on the twentieth century from the First World War onward. Theorising on international relations before this time is primarily addressed within the scholarship on diplomatic history, and there only glancingly; my project helps to extend the history of theories of international relations back into the Victorian era.<sup>34</sup> This study also functions as a corrective to the self-history of the academic field of International Relations (IR). The history of IR is all too often informed by an a-historical 'mythology of doctrines', in which the twentieth-century dialectic between the schools of realism and idealism is projected back onto earlier times and thinkers.<sup>35</sup> This study, in contrast, provides a contextual account of the manifestation of several major themes of international relations theory in mid-Victorian Britain — most notably of the notion of the balance of power. The more historically nuanced scholarly literature on the concept highlights the nineteenth century as the time when the concept was fundamentally re-imagined (from 'associational' to 'adversarial'), without there having been a detailed study of its use during the Victorian era.<sup>36</sup> The thesis, in contrast, illuminates such conceptual evolution within one strand of political thought of the day, namely that of Victorian conservatives.

This thesis recovers the international political thought of Victorian conservatives in order to ensure that it has a representation in these historiographies which does justice to the vital importance of conservatism in Victorian political and intellectual life, to the salience of its positions on international affairs for Victorian

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<sup>31</sup> Charmley (2003); Hicks (2007); (2011).

<sup>32</sup> Gambles (1999); Green (1995); Hilton (1988). In addition, this international political thought mainly concerns political economy.

<sup>33</sup> See the discussion of Hicks et al in chapter 4 for an example of such a reinterpretation.

<sup>34</sup> For two particularly worthwhile recent endeavours in this same vein see Koskenniemi (2001) and Sylvest (2009), treating respectively the history of international law and liberal international thought. See further e.g. Bourne (1970); Charmley (1999); Gulick (1955); Keene (2002); (2005); Lowe (1998); Ramsay (1925); Taylor (1954).

<sup>35</sup> For the concept of 'mythology of doctrines', see Skinner (2002: 59).

<sup>36</sup> See Little (2007: 52); Pollard (1923: 58); Schroeder (1989: 141). For the most sophisticated treatment of

conservatism, and to its participation in the evolution of international relations theory over the centuries.

### **Outline**

This thesis is structured thematically, by the themes and tropes which it uncovers in the political thought of conservatives.<sup>37</sup> The focus is upon those concepts, aims, assumptions, and rhetoric which conservatives used again and again when they engaged in debate or had to cope with crises.

The first four chapters identify in detail the distinctly conservative theories of international relations articulated in Victorian Britain. The fifth chapter relates and contrasts this conservative thought with one of the most prominent aspects of contemporary liberal and radical perspectives on the international sphere, the notion of nationality. The sixth and final chapter of the thesis compares the body of mainstream conservative thought with the thought of Whigs and of centrist, “hard-headed” liberals; people who thought of themselves as “liberal” but whose world-view and ideas came close to that of self-identified conservatives.

This thesis argues that conservative commentators perceived particular problems and trends in international affairs, including the demise of the Treaty of Vienna, the spread of nationalism and increase of popular influence on foreign policy, and, as a result of the liberals' foreign policy, the potential isolation of Britain among the great powers. The thesis furthermore argues that mainstream conservative commentators held a distinctive set of concepts and aspirations – such as the centrality of great power politics, the primacy of force and interests, and the value of stability and order – which informed their understanding of international relations. Taken together, these concepts and commitments amounted to a theory of international politics. Finally, the thesis shows how they drew upon a particular set of themes to deal with the problematic trends which they discerned: these included a stress on the importance on hierarchy, leadership, and deference; advocacy for an assertive, vigorous foreign policy backed by a well-prepared military; the rejection of the principle of nationality as a cause of disorder and conflict; and a focus on first the Treaty of Vienna and later the balance of power system to secure order and stability in Europe.

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early nineteenth-century international relations theory see Schroeder (1989); (1994a); (1994b); (2001).

<sup>37</sup> For a study framed by debates, see Parry (2006). For a study framed by problems and crises perceived by its subjects, see Green (1995). For studies framed by themes in thought, see Bell (2007a); Sylvest (2009); Varouxakis (2002).

The first chapter briefly analyses conservatives' basic ontology of international politics; the entities and actors of the international sphere which they discerned. This chapter addresses attitudes towards great powers and weaker states, and conservatives' focus on statesmen as the actors of international politics.

The second chapter investigates what conservatives thought were the well-springs of foreign policy; what drove political actors? This chapter addresses notions of ambition, glory, and prestige; the distinction between aggressive and moderate attitudes on the part of statesmen; reason and passion as drivers of foreign policy; the relationship of leadership and deference between statesmen and the general populace; the role of morality and self-interest in setting and judging foreign policy; and the rights and wrongs of annexation and of intervention.

The third chapter shows what conservatives thought were the dynamics of international politics. This chapter concerns the conservatives' understanding of the principles governing the functioning of the international sphere, its mechanisms and processes, and addresses notions of interests and competition, settlements and compromise; the roles of the potential and the actual use of force in international politics; the function of honour and an assertive diplomacy as a means to avoid war; and the prescriptions which followed regarding proper statesmanship.

The fourth chapter illuminates conservatives' understanding of and commitment to international order. This chapter analyses conservative thought on what international order consisted in, why it was desirable, how it was threatened, and how it was to be secured. This chapter addresses conservatives' worries about war and hegemony; theorising on the role of treaties in providing stability; the Treaty of Vienna and the foundations of the international diplomatic order; and the balance of power as the ordering principle of international relations.

The fifth chapter examines conservative thought on the concept of nationality. The principle of nationality was a theme central to the liberal international political thought of Victorian Britain. An investigation of conservative thought on the issue is consequently important for our correct apprehension of how conservative thought was distinctive with regards to one of the main ontological and normative commitments of Victorian liberal international thought.

The sixth and final chapter relates conservative thought to the international thought of groups and figures liminal to Victorian conservatism. The chapter investigates to what extent Whig and "hard-headed" liberal thinkers drew upon the

themes of conservative political thought in fashioning their arguments, to what extent they took conservative positions in the debates in which they involved themselves, and what aspects of their political thought compelled them to take these conservative positions.

The first part of this thesis consequently identifies and elaborates on the coherent set of concepts, preoccupations, and aspirations which formed the dominant interpretative framework for international affairs among conservatives. The final two chapters then offer a comparative perspective which refines our insight into the distinctive and characteristic elements of conservative thought on international relations in mid-Victorian Britain.

# I. The entities and actors of the international sphere

## The notion of great powers

Conservatives focused all but exclusively on states and their statesmen when commenting on international affairs. They viewed states as the basic entities of the European international sphere and thought that international politics revolved around statesmen and the dynamic of their interactions. Conservatives made two distinctions which deeply influenced their perspective on international affairs. Firstly, they distinguished between “great powers” and other states<sup>38</sup>. Secondly, they distinguished between the country as a whole and the state in particular, between statesmen and the general population.

Conservatives used the notion of “great powers” to denote those powerful states which generally took account of each other's opinions and together determined the course of international affairs. A great power had voice; such a state was 'powerful enough to be respected by' the other great powers, to have its wishes taken into account.<sup>39</sup> Great powers also had agency; a great power could influence events and together the great powers decided the course of international politics. As conservative commentators put it, once the great powers 'take the affair in hand and settle it', the smaller states 'can little influence' the course of events; 'great powers ... interfere with overpowering force, and settle the matter offhand in their own sense', determining the fate of 'their satellites the Minor States'.<sup>40</sup>

Both voice and agency followed from the strength of a state.<sup>41</sup> The weaker states, unless directly involved in a particular issue, were, conservatives thought, mostly irrelevant to international relations. They lacked the power to assert themselves and would moreover generally be ignored by the great powers; even when 'friendly, ... they are scarcely sources of strength'.<sup>42</sup> As used in conservative commentary, the scope of the notion of “great powers” was flexible, primarily informed by the immediate

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<sup>38</sup> See e.g. Oliphant (1864a: 389); Patterson (1864a: 117). Keene (2013a); (2013b) argues that states were understood as great, middle, or small powers as much as as sovereign entities, with a concomitant focus on interests rather than rights, and that the former perspective was more prevalent in journalistic rather than juristic accounts of European politics. The British conservative commentary studied here conforms to this characterisation, as will become obvious over the course of the thesis.

<sup>39</sup> Burrows (1877: 538). See also Cowell (1876c: 448); Frere (1876: 491-2); Gleig (1866: 649); Patterson (1864b: 638, 648); Russell (1877: 211).

<sup>40</sup> Oliphant (1864b: 504) and Lever (1870b: 602) and Oliphant (1864b: 504) and Dasent (1870: 295). See also Cecil (1864a: 279-80).

<sup>41</sup> Cecil (1864b: 517).

<sup>42</sup> Gleig (1866: 639).

diplomatic context. In discussions of the Eastern Question from 1876-78, for instance, the phrase “the great powers” referred mainly to Britain, Russia, Germany, and Austria.<sup>43</sup> Since France and Italy played no significant role in the affair, they were consequently not generally denoted by use of “the great powers” in this particular debate.<sup>44</sup>

Conservatives perceived the relationship between great powers and other states as one of hierarchy and inequality. They thought that other states could generally only hope to make an impact on international politics under the leadership of a great power (unless they happened to be guided by an exceptional statesman such as Cavour, as examined below) and that even their independent existence was precarious, secured not by their own power, but only on the sufferance of the great powers. For instance, conservative commentators assumed that the small German states could only influence international affairs by arranging themselves behind Prussia and its ambitions.<sup>45</sup> Prussia was envisaged as the leader, 'invest[ed] ... with the national executive power of Germany' and with the mass of German states deferring to its leadership.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, conservatives argued that, if states needed to band together to oppose German aggression, such a coalition would only form and act effectively if given British leadership.<sup>47</sup> In international politics, as in the domestic sphere, conservatives perceived followers and leaders, and only through showing deference to good leadership could the followers hope to make a difference and prosper.

The great powers were the strong states. This had a specific meaning for conservatives; they connected great power status to polity size, the stability of the society, and the strength of the military. The last aspect was easily the most important to conservatives. Rather than countries or peoples, international politics revolved around statesmen and the institutions at their disposal. A country's territory, population, or prosperity did not translate directly into power. These fed into state strength only by influencing the resources available to the government.<sup>48</sup> In discussing countries' power,

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<sup>43</sup> Cowell (1877b: 258-9); (1877h: 613); (1878a: 100-1); (1878f: 773); Craik (1878b: 256); Hamley (1877c: 250); Keppel (1878: 553, 556, 570).

<sup>44</sup> France did not involve itself in the issue, and Italy lacked the influence. During this debate, they only cropped up as fellow great powers in discussions of the influence of the general geo-politics of Europe on the policy of Austria or Germany. See for instance Cowell (1877h: 622); Frere (1876: 490-502).

<sup>45</sup> Hamley (1870c: 784); Wilson (1871a: 78, 90). See also the section on the unification of Germany in chapter 5.

<sup>46</sup> Wilson (1871b: 368); see also Dasent (1870: 293); Hamley (1870c: 784); Wilson (1871a: 73-4).

<sup>47</sup> See e.g. Gleig (1870a: 656); Hamley (1871c: 496); Wilson (1870: 391-2). This held for weaker states. When great powers cooperated there was no one leader -- and such cooperation was all the more unreliable because of it. See also chapter 3 for more detail.

<sup>48</sup> Cecil (1864a: 237, 239); Dasent (1870: 296); Oliphant (1864a: 389); Swayne (1867: 197); Wilson (1870:

conservatives consequently considered the military force it could project as the main variable.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, conservatives thought that for a state to be able to engage assertively with international politics, it needed to have 'social cohesion' and a stable political system.<sup>50</sup> A lack of such cohesion and stability, conservative commentators agreed in 1870-71, had undermined the vigour of France and caused her defeat in her war with Prussia. 'France failed in the present war', G.R. Gleig asserted, 'because ... her entire social system ... was rotten to the core'<sup>51</sup>. Great powers were consequently those states which could make themselves heard abroad through the confident projection of ample military force, resulting from a well-prepared and well-funded military, part of a stable and orderly domestic political sphere, in a sizable, populous, and prosperous country.

### **The normative and causal centrality of great power politics**

Conservative commentators themselves had three main areas of concern when considering international politics, and they assumed that statesmen shared these preoccupations. These three focal points of international politics were the particular interests of one's country; the diplomacy of great power politics; and the peace, order, and stability of the European sphere.<sup>52</sup> These foci were more or less hierarchical. When encountering an issue in international politics, the statesmen of a great power, conservatives thought, would initially be concerned that the dispute did not spark any sort of armed conflict, with its inherent possibility of involving (further) great powers and spreading into a general war. However, if the dispute, as it developed, seemed likely to result in beneficial changes to the political order of Europe, then this promise would likely overshadow the statesman's dislike of states using force. If, finally, any particular interests of the great power in question became involved, then the statesman would

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384, 387); (1871b: 362). This perspective led conservatives into a perennial debate with liberals over military spending, in which conservatives argued that Britain's prosperity was only a source of strength if some of it was spent on the army and navy.

<sup>49</sup> Cecil (1871: 256-7, 272-4, 284-5); Gleig (1866: 657); (1871: 130); Hamley, E.B. (1866: 247); (1871b: 382); Lever (1871c: 174); Oliphant (1864b: 506). See chapter 3 for more detail.

<sup>50</sup> Cecil (1870: 550). See also Gleig (1870a: 641, 656); (1870b: 663); Hamley (1870c: 782-3); Lever (1871b: 585); (1871d: 367); Wilson (1870: 374-5).

<sup>51</sup> Gleig (1870b: 657). See also Cecil (1871: 257-8); Hamley (1871c: 497); (1871b: 383). G.R. Gleig (1796-1888) was a conservative author, appointed chaplain-general of the military in 1844.

See also, on the impotence of Austrian policy as a result of the divisions in its political system, Cowell (1876c: 462); (1877h: 621); (1878j: 499-501); Craik (1878b: 260-1, 284); Frere (1876: 490-1, 501); Hamley (1877f: 634); (1878a: 111-2); Russell (1877: 211); Shand (1878: 751-2).

<sup>52</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1864a: 280); (1870: 543); Lever (1870b: 600-2); Oliphant (1865: 118); Patterson (1864a: 110); Wilson (1870: 380). On Cecil, see also Grenville (1963: 6, 22).

focus on securing these, and might even be willing to use force themselves to do so.<sup>53</sup> Only a threat to the peace and order of Europe as a whole – the spectre of a general European war – could trump the importance of the particular interests of a country.

The conservative conceptualisation of the European international sphere as made up of great powers and smaller, weaker states was the general view taken in the Victorian era.<sup>54</sup> The conservatives' ontology was distinctive not because they had a concept of great powers or even because they focused most of their attention on the great powers, but because for them this great power interaction all but summed up international politics. Order and stability could only be threatened by great powers going to war, and only a great power could seriously threaten Britain's interests. Consequently, only the great powers and their relations held normative significance or causal relevance for conservative commentators.<sup>55</sup>

Liberals had a different, wider set of normative concerns, which drew attention away from the great powers and their politics and made the latter seem less causally and normatively significant. In general terms, they had a 'progressive vision of an international society ... developing in more peaceful and inclusive directions'.<sup>56</sup> As a consequence, they subordinated the politics of the great powers to their progressive vision. In the 'traditional simple British Liberal perspective', this vision replaced a world of great powers and their particular politics with 'a world divided between liberalism and autocracy'.<sup>57</sup> Even when this divide became more muddled by the late 1860s, liberals continued to perceive international politics through the lens of the advancement or otherwise of their normative ideals. The liberals' normative commitments contained two strands; a Christian humanitarianism and a constitutional liberalism, with the latter supplemented with a qualified affirmation of national self-determination.<sup>58</sup> As a consequence, liberal and radical commentators often included and sometimes gave pride of place to a wider set of actors beyond the great powers, such as the national movements and peoples of Italy and Germany, and the subject populations of the

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<sup>53</sup> A particular interest was, for instance, Britain's interest in the Baltic Sea being open for trade. See e.g. Derby quoted in Hicks (2007: 206); Malmesbury (1859c).

<sup>54</sup> See e.g. Varouxakis (2007).

<sup>55</sup> Dasent (1870: 294-6, 312); Gleig (1870a: 648-9, 651); Hamley (1870c: 782-3, 790); (1871c: 496); Lever (1870b: 600-2); Oliphant (1864a: 389, 369); (1865: 118); Patterson (1864a: 110); (1864b: 644-6); (1864c: 253); Swayne (1867: 196-7); Wilson (1871a: 81-2); (1871b: 364).

<sup>56</sup> Sylvest (2009: 49). See also Gladstone (1879: 420-2).

<sup>57</sup> Parry (2006: 223; see also 214).

<sup>58</sup> Parry (2006: 4-5, 228, 230-1, 278, 327-8, 333-5). The qualification was that national communities should not 'separate from a larger liberal constitutional power. National uprisings were justifiable on constitutional grounds – against foreign or militarist oppression and in pursuit of the rule of law' (Parry 2006: 21).



Ottoman Empire.<sup>59</sup>

Conservative commentators, in contrast, thought each of these of little significance. The travails of small states and subject peoples were of secondary importance, only needing to be taken into account when they factored into the politics of the great powers.<sup>60</sup> This exclusive focus of conservatives on the great powers manifested itself in noted contrast to liberal perspectives during both the unification of Germany and during the Eastern Question crisis of the late 1870s, and was most striking in the debate on the unification of Italy.

For liberals, the course of events from 1864 until 1871 was one of the German 'national cause', of the German nation achieving political unity, part of the broader telos of the international sphere.<sup>61</sup> Events had both their impetus and their significance as a national, German project of unification. Conservatives, in contrast, thought that political integration was not inevitable and mostly driven by various forms of great power competition, first between Prussia and Austria, then between Prussia and France.<sup>62</sup> They considered the unification significant, meanwhile, primarily in its effects on great power politics: it upset the balance of power and helped shatter the equilibrium of Europe.<sup>63</sup>

Liberals and radicals who were part of the agitation movement, galvanised by the Bulgarian Atrocities, framed the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78 as being about the fate of the populations subject to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>64</sup> The liberal agitation movement minimised 'the problem of the relations between the powers'.<sup>65</sup> Conservative commentators, in contrast, presented the Eastern Question as being about the great powers and their interactions. 'The Eastern Question', Herbert Cowell stated, 'is far less one of adjusting the relations of the Porte to its subjects than of the international

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<sup>59</sup> Agency could also rest in more amorphous notions, such as Gladstone's assumption of the progressive influence of 'the general judgement of civilised mankind'. Gladstone (1870: 593).

<sup>60</sup> Courthope (1880: 566-7); Cowell (1876b: 247; 1876c: 462; 1877h: 611); Hamley (1878b: 242-3); Northcote (1878: 357); Smith and Layard (1877: 288).

<sup>61</sup> Dicey (1866b: 484); see also e.g. Bagehot (1866); Dicey (1866a: 393-4); (1866b: 482-3); Dwyer (1870: 390-4); Gladstone (1870: 569-70). See further Pratt (1985: 546, 557, 570).

<sup>62</sup> Cecil (1864a: 252-3); (1870: 545); Dasent (1870: 294, 297, 299); Oliphant (1864a: 394, 396); (1864b: 503); (1865: 122); Patterson (1864a: 130-1); (1864b: 641); Swayne (1867: 197); Wilson (1871a: 78, 81-82); (1871b: 362, 364).

<sup>63</sup> See e.g. Hamley (1870b: 524); (1870c: 782-3, 790); (1871c: 496).

<sup>64</sup> The Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78 was sparked by insurrections and atrocities in the Ottoman Empire's European provinces. As the crisis morphed into the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, attention shifted to Russian acts and aims, and the necessity for Britain to secure its interests in the context of a Russian victory. The armistice of San Stefano was widely condemned in Britain as unacceptable from this perspective, and the other great powers forced Russia to adjust its terms in the Congress of Berlin.

<sup>65</sup> Shannon (1963: 215). See also Gladstone (1879). See further Parry (2006: 228-231, 278); Shannon (1963: 212); Sylvest (2009: 38, 49-50).

rivalries of the surrounding Powers'.<sup>66</sup> And Frere, in an introductory article, sketched the contemporary situation by giving an overview of the likely aims and intentions of the great powers and of the current attitudes among them, taking care to note how this political situation differed from the run-up to the Crimean War two decades earlier.<sup>67</sup> As the issue was debated over the following years, conservative commentators maintained their focus on the great powers.<sup>68</sup> Finally, in their reflections after the crisis had ended, they still only accorded the great powers any relevance. The fate of the subject populations, such an important concern for liberal and radical commentators, held no intrinsic interest.<sup>69</sup> Subject peoples and small states were discussed only when and where they might lead the great powers into conflict.<sup>70</sup>

### Italian unification and the centrality of great power politics

The unification of Italy was the one episode in these decades which was arguably least about great powers and interstate politics.<sup>71</sup> Liberals and radicals attached great importance to these events because they involved the liberty and national unification of the Italian people.<sup>72</sup> In this sense the unification of Italy became a touchstone for a whole generation of liberals in their perspective on international affairs.<sup>73</sup> Conservative commentators, however, still explained the course of events and framed its significance in reference to great power politics. While the Italian peninsula was the locus of the events discussed in conservatives' articles and Italian unification their result, the affairs of Italy itself received but little attention from conservative commentators.

When considering the significance of developments on the Italian peninsula,

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<sup>66</sup> Cowell (1877b: 256-7); see also Courthope (1880: 566-7); Cowell (1876b: 245; 1876b: 247; 1878a: 101; 1878j: 499-501); Northcote (1878: 359). Herbert Cowell was a barrister, born in 1836 or 1837 (Foster 1885).

<sup>67</sup> Frere (1876: 490-6). See also Cowell (1876a: 82-7; 1876b: 245-7); Smith (1876: 580-3); Smith and Layard (1877: 277).

<sup>68</sup> See e.g. Cowell (1876a:88); (1877a: 122); (1877b: 256-7); (1877c: 371); (1877d: 512-6); (1878a: 100-1); Hamley (1877a: 750-1); Shand (1878: 744); Smith and Layard (1877: 277).

<sup>69</sup> Cowell (1878g: 122-3); (1878h: 250); (1878j: 499-500); Hamley (1878c: 372-3); Northcote and Allardyce (1878: 770-1).

<sup>70</sup> Courthope (1880: 566-7); Cowell (1876b: 247-9); (1876c: 462); (1877h: 611); (1878j: 499-501, 510); (1878k: 759); Hamley (1877b: 131); (1878b: 242-3); Northcote (1878: 357); Smith (1876: 570); Smith and Layard (1877: 288).

<sup>71</sup> The unification of Italy here refers to a series of events from 1859 to 1861: the war between Austria on the one hand and allies France and Piedmont on the other; the peace of Villafranca; and the subsequent annexations of central Italy by Piedmont, Savoy and Nice by France, and eventually southern Italy by Piedmont. Apart from Italian affairs themselves, debates in Britain revolved around the acts and intentions of France, the possibility of other great powers intervening, and the implications of Italian developments for the European order in general.

<sup>72</sup> See e.g. Gladstone (1860: 100). See further Beales (1961: 34); Parry (1996: 168); Urban (1938: 117-8, 121-2).

<sup>73</sup> See e.g. Harvie (1976); Kent (1978).

conservatives consistently focused on the implications of these events for the great powers and their relations, and with that – primarily through the ascendancy of France – for the order and stability of Europe. Illustrating this preoccupation, an article by Robert Cecil on the Italian question was in fact titled 'France and Europe'.<sup>74</sup>

In the early stages of this episode in European affairs, stretching from the run-up to the war to the armistice of Villa-Franca between France and Austria, conservatives understood the Italian issue as first a potential and then an actual conflict between France and Austria – Italy was merely the venue for their contest. The war was significant in that it would determine whether the hegemony over Italy was to be held by France or Austria.<sup>75</sup> This was itself a matter of concern, not because of its effects on the Italian people, but because of its influence on the balance of power of Europe. Conservatives considered Austria to be an important stabilising force in Europe – holding its disparate empire together and checking both Russia and France – whose interests made it a natural ally to Britain, whereas they, like most Englishmen, viewed the France of Napoleon III with suspicion. As Tremenheere asserted, 'A predominating French influence in Italy ... would be incompatible with the security of Germany, hazardous to the vast interests of England in the Mediterranean, and totally subversive of the balance of power'.<sup>76</sup> The initial events in Italy conservatives thought significant in their detrimental adjustment of the balance of power – Austria lost a prosperous province and declined in power and stature, while France gained both paramount influence over the Italian peninsula and the prestige of victory over Austria.<sup>77</sup> The second initial concern which conservatives had regarding the events in Italy pertained to peace and order in the European sphere in general. Conservatives feared that any war between great powers, started with however limited aims in mind, could easily come to involve other states and devolve into a general war.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, the policy of Malmesbury and Derby, in power until June 1859, was aimed first at avoiding the incidence of war,

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<sup>74</sup> Cecil (1859). See also e.g. Patterson's (1859a) article 'Napoleon III and Europe' and Tremenheere's (1859) article 'Napoleonism and Italy', and the de facto focus of Forsyth's (1861) article 'Italy'.

Robert Cecil (1830-1903), Marquess of Salisbury from 1868 onwards, but here referred to as Cecil throughout, was a Conservative politician, sitting in the House of Commons from 1854-68, in the House of Lords afterwards, and eventually serving as Prime Minister three times, from 1885-86, 1886-92, and 1895-1902. From 1857 until the mid-1860s Cecil mainly supported himself by authoring journal articles. His writings also provided him with a political platform and reputation within the Conservative party.

<sup>75</sup> See e.g. Patterson (1859a: 380).

<sup>76</sup> Tremenheere (1859: 262; see also 266).

<sup>77</sup> Aytoun (1860: 247); Forsyth (1861: 171); Lever (1863c: 64); Patterson (1859a: 380); Oliphant (1860a: 357); Swayne (1861: 84); Tremenheere (1859: 268).

<sup>78</sup> Cecil (1859: 7); Hardman (1859: 621); Patterson (1859a: 380); Tremenheere (1859: 264-5).

and when war had broken out, at preventing its further spread.<sup>79</sup>

In the aftermath of the peace of Villafranca, the future of the polities of first Central Italy and then Southern Italy was thrown into doubt. Eventually, they ended up being annexed to Piedmont, while Piedmont ceded Savoy and Nice to France. As these events unfolded and conservatives commented on the manoeuvring of Napoleon III and Cavour, the focus of their analyses remained on great power politics. With peace re-established, conservative commentators reflected on the gains realised by Napoleon III and how these could enable him to tread a path of successive wars, conceived of as limited in scope, but which would nevertheless imperil the European order.<sup>80</sup> Events in Italy were now considered significant primarily in how they constrained or facilitated the suspected projects of Napoleon III.<sup>81</sup>

Conservatives feared that in the future Italy would be 'a mere satellite of France'.<sup>82</sup> The cession of Savoy and Nice, for instance, was significant – besides being proof that all talk of liberty had indeed, as conservatives had argued, been a fig-leaf for a project of French aggrandisement – in that through it France gained further military leverage over Italy.<sup>83</sup> This conservative perspective on the significance of Italian affairs after Villa-Franca contrasted with that of the liberals, for whom Napoleon III receded in importance at this stage, as Piedmont came to be seen as an independent actor. Among conservatives, there was, at least until Italy was mostly unified by 1862, less of a sense that Piedmont could possibly be effectively independent of the will of Napoleon III.<sup>84</sup> Conservatives consequently thought the events in Italy significant in their possible role in a Napoleonic project for the European sphere in general.

Conservatives again gave pride of place to great power politics in their explanations of how Italian events came about and why they developed as they did. They argued that Napoleon III's diplomatic manoeuvring since the end of the Crimean War had set the stage for the events in Italy, primarily by convincing Russia of its

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<sup>79</sup> See e.g. Malmesbury (1859a); (1859c).

<sup>80</sup> Cecil (1859: 25-30); Forsyth (1861: 136, 142, 176-7); Patterson (1859b: 379, 389); (1860: 48-51, 69-74); (1862c: 518); Oliphant (1860a: 359); Tremeneheere (1859: 267-8).

<sup>81</sup> Conservatives speculated extensively about Napoleon III's future plans. See e.g. Patterson (1859b: 379, 385, 389) and (1860: 48-51). See also Cecil (1859: 6-7, 18-20, 25-30); Forsyth (1861: 173-4); Oliphant (1860a: 359); (1860b: 638, 650); (1860c: 740); Patterson (1859a: 387, 390); (1862b: 255); (1862c: 508, 512, 518, 524, 526); Tremeneheere (1859: 267-8).

<sup>82</sup> Swayne (1861: 84). See also Aytoun (1860: 247); Forsyth (1861: 173-4); Lever (1863a: 583); (1863b: 655, 661-3); (1863c: 64); Oliphant (1860a: 357, 360); (1860b: 649); (1860c: 734, 738); Patterson (1860: 69-74); (1862c: 503, 514, 518).

<sup>83</sup> Oliphant (1860a: 360); (1860b: 650); Patterson (1860: 91).

<sup>84</sup> Lever (1863c: 56-7). See also Lever (1863a: 583); (1863b: 655); (1863c: 58, 60-1, 64). For more optimistic retrospective accounts of Italy's likely role in Europe, see Cecil (1862: 226); Patterson (1862c: 518); Tremeneheere and Portland (1865: 371-2, 395-6, 403).

interest in a weakened Austria.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, conservatives argued that the *unfolding* of Italian events, as well as their initial possibility, was first of all determined by great power politics. They thought of the 1859 war as a Franco-Austrian affair, in which Piedmont had 'gained but little' and was lucky not to have been 'crushed and obliterated in the course of the frightful collision between two such powers as France and Austria'.<sup>86</sup> Over the course of the subsequent annexations by France and Piedmont, conservatives still privileged the agency of the great powers. The annexation of Central Italy by Piedmont might be thought to have proven the agency of the latter, but even this course of events had become possible only, conservatives noted, because the respective influences of the great powers cancelled each other out, with Britain constraining the actions of France.<sup>87</sup> Italy and its politics, peoples, or political situation – with the exception of Cavour, considered below – were not accorded agency in these accounts. Great powers and their politics were the causal force of international politics.

### **Statesmen as actors in the context of great power politics**

Conservatives conceived of international politics as an affair between governments and their institutions, rather than between whole amorphous countries. When conservatives talked about international politics, they often used terms denoting countries, states, and statesmen as synonyms, or at least as different facets of one entity. They could for instance switch from using "Prussia" to "Bismarck" to "country" or "nation" without seemingly changing the referent.<sup>88</sup> This should merely be understood, however, as a convenience of their writing about diplomacy. When they discussed explicitly how the entities of international politics came to act in their particular ways, for their particular ends, conservatives drew upon a conceptual scheme which juxtaposed 'Governments' and 'peoples', the 'popular mind' and the 'minds of persons of elevated political station', and considered statesmen as a distinct category of actors.<sup>89</sup> Conservatives thought of statesmen and the institutions which they commanded as the agents of international

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<sup>85</sup> Aytoun (1860: 248, 250-3); Cecil (1859: 1, 11, 25-30); Derby, cited in Urban (1938: 200); Forsyth (1861: 133-4, 138-9); Hardman (1859: 612-5, 621, 623); Lever (1863b: 660); Malmesbury (1859c); Oliphant (1860a: 358-9, 362-3); (1860b: 638); (1860c: 734, 736, 740); Patterson (1859a: 376, 384-67, 390); (1859b: 376-7); (1860: 104-8, 140-46); (1862c: 512, 526); Stanley (1860: 163); Tremenheere (1859: 244, 264-5);

<sup>86</sup> Cecil (1859: 6-7) and Hardman (1859: 621); see also Tremenheere (1859: 244).

<sup>87</sup> Forsyth (1861: 138-9). See also e.g. Aytoun (1860: 248, 252); Oliphant (1860a: 362-3); (1860b: 638).

<sup>88</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1870: 550-1, 554-5); Gleig (1866: 644-5, 647-8); Hamley (1871a: 240); (1871c: 489, 494-5).

<sup>89</sup> Patterson (1864a: 111) and Wilson (1871b: 362). For "statesmen" as a distinct category, see Cecil (1864a: 273); (1870: 540); Dasent (1870: 295). See also Dasent (1870: 293, 310); Lever (1870c: 509).

politics.<sup>90</sup> The statesman's skill and quality was consequently an important factor in any country's rise or ruin.

Conservatives thought of statesmen as representing their countries and conducting the practice of international politics. Statesmen however did not have free reign to act as they would like. In setting foreign policy, statesmen ought to be guided, conservatives thought, by their own country's interests, and they could be coerced by the desires of the general population.<sup>91</sup> In conducting international politics, statesmen were moreover constrained by the circumstances of great power politics. 'We rate very highly', Robert Patterson opined, 'the influence of great men upon their times, but they cannot contend successfully against the circumstances of their age. In truth they never seek to do so. ... they keep in harmony with the spirit of the hour'.<sup>92</sup> Statesmen were embedded in a particular dynamic of great power politics. Only by acting within and appealing to this dynamic could statesmen have effective agency. Conservatives frequently criticised liberal statesmen exactly because the latter supposedly ignored this dynamic, this constraint on viable policy options.<sup>93</sup>

Despite these limits on their agency, statesmen took pride of place in conservative narratives of international affairs. Napoleon III dominated their attention during the years from the Crimean War until his fall in the Franco-Prussian War, while Bismarck featured prominently from the Danish Duchies affair on until the Eastern Question crisis of the 1870s, and onward. Conservatives also had a special respect for Cavour, as that rare influential statesman of a lesser power, and noted the lessons to be drawn from his achievements.

Conservative commentators presented Napoleon III as a master diplomatist, effectively manipulating great power politics in order to realise his own ends.<sup>94</sup> He effectively appealed to the interests and aims of each of these fellow great powers, convincing them that they too would gain from his actions. As the Crimean War drew to an end, Napoleon III had, conservatives thought, co-opted the mediating Austria and decided on terms and timing of peace which furthered his interests, while side-lining

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<sup>90</sup> Cecil (1870: 540); Gleig (1866: 649); Lever (1870c: 509); Patterson (1864a: 111). This contrasted with the opinion of Gladstone, for whom it was the country the aims and opinions of which mattered in the end, with statesmen merely forming a conduit for these (1870: 583). See also the next chapter.

<sup>91</sup> See the next chapter for a detailed analysis of these aspects of conservative thought.

<sup>92</sup> Patterson (1862b: 246). R.H. Patterson (1821-1886) was an author and editor (of the *Conservative Press and Globe*), who was close to Disraeli.

<sup>93</sup> See the third chapter for a detailed analysis of these aspects of conservative thought.

<sup>94</sup> Aytoun (1860: 245, 247, 252); Cecil (1859: 1); Forsyth (1861: 173-5); Oliphant (1860b: 649-50); (1860c: 740); Patterson (1859a: 382, 390); (1859b: 375, 379); (1860: 11-12, 63, 69-74, 80-83, 90-1, 107-8, 112, 125-6); (1862b: 260); (1862c: 518); Stanley (1861: 165, 177).

those of Britain.<sup>95</sup> He then steered Europe towards confrontation in the Italian question.<sup>96</sup> Having concluded the war with Austria on his terms, and again to the disadvantage of his ally, Napoleon III could meddle in Italian affairs at will.<sup>97</sup> And over the course of the decade, Napoleon III had slowly dissolved the set of alliances which supported the Vienna settlement by convincing the relevant countries that their interests were in conflict.<sup>98</sup> While conservatives worried about his aims and intentions, they could not help but respect Napoleon III's statesmanship, the agency he aggregated for himself through his understanding and manipulation of the circumstances of great power politics.

Just as in the minds of conservative commentators Napoleon III had made the unification of Italy possible, it was Bismarck's statesmanship through which the unification of Germany had been realised. Wilson was representative of the respect conservatives felt for Bismarck when he stated that the rise of Prussia and the unification of Germany were 'immense achievements' which were mainly 'due to that daring Minister's [Bismarck's] temper and character'.<sup>99</sup> Again, it was his insight into the dynamics of great power politics and his effective appeals to the interests of other powers which conservatives singled out for praise. Commenting on Prussia's war with Austria in 1866, Wilson complimented Bismarck on properly apprehending the state of affairs: 'the situation, when it had become strained beyond pacific arbitrament, was at once seen and accepted, and the quarrel was fought out'.<sup>100</sup> More generally, Bismarck was a 'sound and far-seeing ... statesman' whose co-option of Russia into his schemes had made the events of European international politics from 1866 to 1878 possible: 'to [their partnership] is traced the downfall of Austria and France, the unification of Germany, the eclipse of Europe, and the quiescence of Russia'.<sup>101</sup>

Considering their focus on both Napoleon and Bismarck, it comes as no

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<sup>95</sup> France and Austria secured their mutual interests regarding the Danubian provinces, whilst side-lining those of Britain in the Black Sea and Caucasus. See E.B. Hamley (1856a: 240-1); Oliphant (1856: 483); Patterson (1855a: 115); (1856a: 611, 617, 623); (1856b: 731, 734); Swayne (1856: 388).

<sup>96</sup> Aytoun (1860: 248, 250-3); Cecil (1859: 1, 11, 25-30); Derby, cited in Urban (1938: 200); Forsyth (1861: 133-4, 138-9); Hardman (1859: 612-5, 621, 623); Lever (1863b: 660); Malmesbury (1859c); Oliphant (1860a: 358-9, 362-3); (1860b: 638); (1860c: 734, 736, 740); Patterson (1859a: 376, 384-67, 390); (1859b: 376-7); (1860: 104-8, 140-46); (1862c: 512, 526); Stanley (1860: 163); Tremenheere (1859: 244, 264-5).

<sup>97</sup> Lever (1863c: 56-7, 64); Patterson (1862c: 512, 517-8).

<sup>98</sup> The Crimean war had set Britain up against Russia, the Italian question now led to the estrangement of Britain from Austria, and the alliance between Prussia and Britain would surely be Napoleon III's next target. Cecil (1859: 25-30); Patterson (1860: 119-125, 140-6).

<sup>99</sup> Wilson (1871a: 83, 92, 80); see also Cecil (1871: 257); Dasent (1870: 321-2); Gleig (1870a: 648, 650); Lever (1869: 346); (1871b: 583); Wilson (1871b: 364).

<sup>100</sup> Wilson (1871a: 80), commenting on Prussia's war with Austria in 1866.

<sup>101</sup> Kinglake and Austin (1880: 538) and Cowell (1876c: 488).

surprise that in reflecting on the Franco-Prussian war, conservatives tended to emphasise the decisive influence of the foresight and quality of decisions (or lack thereof) made by Bismarck and Napoleon III. Wilson conveyed the spirit of this perspective when he stated that Bismarck 'has held what may be termed joint command with the late Ruler of France over such tremendous issues for the weal or woe of two great nations'<sup>102</sup>. Cecil, for one, considered this an 'exceptional' event, but still presented it as a particularly clear instance of a more general rule: the quality of statesmanship was an important determinant of a country's prospects.<sup>103</sup> He consequently continued to reflect on how a country's political system could be ordered so as to generate the best quality statesmen. This was also how conservatives explained the sudden spectacular downfall of Napoleon III, after having praised him for over a decade: he himself had exceptional ability, but his potential had been neutered by the deleterious influence of the French political system in which he had to operate.<sup>104</sup>

Conservatives thought that statesmen of weaker states, while holding little leverage in international diplomacy, could conceivably utilise their insight into the interests of the great powers to the advantage of their countries. In their analyses of Italian events, conservatives identified Cavour as exactly such an able statesman.<sup>105</sup> Cavour apprehended the trends and tendencies of great power politics and made them work to the advantage of his small, weaker polity. Charles Lever, for instance, argued in his retrospective account of 1863 that Italy would still be divided, if it had not been for a statesman of Cavour's exceptional abilities: 'Of all Italian statesmen Cavour was remarkable for his close and careful study of European politics. He saw that Italy's opportunity must be seized from some contingency in the condition of the Continent ... some political necessity, which a war alone could resolve.'<sup>106</sup> Only a statesman with insight into the nuances of the political realities of the time, his vision unimpaired by a lens of idealistic commitments, could hope to be somewhat of an autonomous actor

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<sup>102</sup> Wilson (1871a: 83, 92, 80); see also Cecil (1871: 257); Dasent (1870: 321-2); Gleig (1870a: 648, 650); Lever (1869: 346); (1871b: 583); Wilson (1871b: 364).

<sup>103</sup> Cecil (1871: 257). See also the conservatives' argument that through Russell's mediocre statesmanship in 1864 Britain's international position had become precarious, Cecil (1864a: 285); (1864b: 517); Patterson (1864b: 640); (1864c: 244).

<sup>104</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1871: 262-4). See also the next chapter for more detail on this aspect of conservative thought.

<sup>105</sup> This allowed conservative commentators, even in the later phases of this course of events, to all but ignore the situation in Italy itself, nor accord agency to the politics or peoples of Italy, but still manage to explain how it could be that Piedmont ended up having gained so much from the course of events, even at some cost to France.

<sup>106</sup> Lever (1863b: 660). Hardman (1865: 673-4) similarly noted Cavour's 'foresight and sagacity'. Charles Lever (1806-1872) was an author, appointed as vice-consul at La Spezia in 1858 and as consul at Trieste in 1867 by successive Conservative governments.



within great power politics.<sup>107</sup>

This chapter has argued that for conservatives it were the great powers and their politics which were causally and normatively significant, and it were statesmen who led and represented these great powers in international politics. The course of international affairs was the result of the interaction between the interests, intentions, and actions of the great powers. The strand of grand-picture determinism in the thought of conservatives was consequently interwoven with accounts of the influence of individual, particularly able actors. While conservatives considered the force of great-power circumstance considerable in determining the course of international affairs, they also considered it possible for sufficiently skilled and pragmatic political actors to work with these circumstances and further the interests of their country. Small countries such as the Italian states were usually, but not necessarily, at the mercy of forces beyond their control. Great powers could more easily assert themselves. Important here, though, was that they too had to deal with reality, with the *de facto* situation of great power politics. Even the great powers were at risk of being swept along by the current of circumstance, if their statesmen focused on their own idealistic concerns and failed to attend carefully to the shifting sands of international diplomacy. This, as discussed in detail in parts of the next two chapters, was exactly what conservative commentators repeatedly argued happened when liberal statesmen guided British policy: these liberals failed to act as proper statesmen and focus on great power politics. Britain's influence in Europe suffered as a result.

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<sup>107</sup> Forsyth (1861: 133-4, 170); Hardman (1859: 612-15); Lever (1863b: 653, 661-3); (1863c: 64); Malmesbury (1859a); (1859d); Patterson (1859a: 376); (1862c: 503-5); Tremenhoe (1859: 264-5).

## **II. The well-springs of foreign policy, or: what drives political actors?**

This chapter progresses from ontology to an analysis of what elements, in the minds of conservatives, shaped the agency of states. What different motivations were there to act, which ends could states choose to pursue, and what influenced their choice one way or another? Conservatives laid special emphasis in their commentary on the ways in which certain attitudes and influences led to conflict. Moreover, conservative and liberal commentators disagreed over the roles for self-interest and morality in international politics. In this chapter the entities of international politics – the country, people, state, and statesmen – are still considered in isolation; the next chapter analyses conservative thought on the dynamics of the interactions between states.

Conservatives drew upon a large set of concepts and dichotomies when discussing the aims and motivations of and influences on a state's foreign policy, such as ambition, aggrandisement, glory, aggression, interests, honour, reason, passion, and sentiment. These terms were ostensibly descriptive, but often carried a clear normative edge – reason, interests, and honour had a positive connotation; aggression, passion, and sentiment had a negative connotation; while the valuation of ambition and glory depended on further context. Generally, these terms and dichotomies were used by themselves, and were not explicitly presented as part of an integrated conceptual scheme. However, the concepts often fit together: reason and passion were connected to non-military and military glory, respectively; military glory implied an aggrandising attitude, and so on. Often, the mere invocation of one of these terms – reason, honour, or interests; passion or an aggressive attitude – was deemed sufficient by an author to indicate a policy or argument as correct or mistaken.

The first part of this chapter concerns conservative thought on states and statesmen in particular; the different kinds of ambition which they could have and the different attitudes which they could adopt. The second part treats reason and passion as motivations for and influences on foreign policy, and with that also the interplay between statesmen and the people in setting foreign policy. Finally, liberals argued for a central role for ethics as a motivation for and influence on foreign policy. The third part investigates how conservatives reacted to these claims and the role they envisaged for morality.

## Motivations and attitudes

Conservative commentators thought that ambition and the pursuit of glory were universal traits of countries, but that these could be pursued through internal achievement or external aggrandisement, corresponding to a moderate or aggressive attitude towards the international sphere. The possibility of one of the continental great powers adopting an aggressive attitude was a perennial concern of conservative commentators.

### Ambition and the military and peaceful path to glory

In reflecting on the causes of particular conflicts in international affairs, conservative commentators often referred to the 'ambition of ... States'.<sup>108</sup> In ascribing ambition to a state conservatives implied not any particular policy aim, but a general state of mind among its statesmen. Ambitious statesmen worked to accrue 'glory' or 'prestige' for their country.<sup>109</sup> Glory and prestige were about being recognised as a great country, with impressive achievements. Conservatives considered ambition a natural presence in a properly vigorous country. Since 'human ambition is an essential element in all human arts and affairs,' Wilson argued in 1871 regarding the rise of Prussia, 'to make Prussian ambition in itself a matter of accusation against Prussia is to make it a matter of accusation against her that she has any energy or spring at all'.<sup>110</sup>

While they considered the ambition to gain glory as natural and laudable, conservatives did discern different means through which a country could attain glory; glory could be pursued through domestic achievement or external aggrandisement. Achievements in non-military areas were those of 'government, commerce, the arts, [and] philosophy' — notably including extra-European empire.<sup>111</sup> Common to the non-military paths to glory was that prestige was gained through 'the favourable opinion of Europe', whereas military glory rested on the forcible recognition of superior military skill.<sup>112</sup> Conservatives disapproved of statesmen who sought glory for their country through the latter means, by 'stun[ning] mankind by the manifestation of physical and material strength'.<sup>113</sup> Conservatives did not think that vigorous patriotic values and

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<sup>108</sup> Cecil (1864a: 238). See also e.g. Cecil (1864a: 242, 248); Gleig (1870a: 654-655); (1870b: 662); Patterson (1865c: 253); Wilson (1871a: 90).

<sup>109</sup> Cecil (1864a: 238); Dasent (1870: 297, 322); Gleig (1866: 652); (1870a: 648); Patterson (1864a: 112); Swayne (1867: 197); Wilson (1871a: 90); (1871b: 357, 360).

<sup>110</sup> Wilson (1871b: 372-3). See also Cecil (1864a: 238); Lever (1871a: 236).

<sup>111</sup> Hamley (1870c: 785); see also e.g. Wilson (1871b: 373).

<sup>112</sup> Hamley (1870c: 786); see also Cecil (1864a: 239); (1870: 542).

<sup>113</sup> Hamley (1871c: 495); see also Cecil (1864a: 238); Dasent (1870: 313); Gleig (1870b: 662); Wilson

impressive military skill were a bad thing – quite the opposite.<sup>114</sup> It was only consciously choosing to go to war as a means of gaining glory – rather than, say, fighting a successful defensive war – which conservatives condemned.<sup>115</sup>

Liberals generally valued liberty and prosperity, and thought of glory as following from the possession and nurturing of these general characteristics of a polity. Conservatives disagreed; while ‘prosperity and liberty ... are just reasons for expressing content’, a country ‘must produce greater results than that before it entitles them to the respect of others’.<sup>116</sup> Conservatives thought that prestige was based the exceptional accomplishments of a country and its people, whether in the pursuits of peace or war.

Cecil used this understanding of prestige to explain the widely assumed French penchant for military glory. British liberals such as Mill and Senior linked this tendency to the French national character, moulded ‘by Napoleon’s corrupting influences’.<sup>117</sup> Cecil’s argument was different. He hypothesised that the people of a country generally desired to replicate most glorious moments of a country’s past.<sup>118</sup> Under Napoleon I, France had revelled in ‘the consciousness of warlike superiority over every other nation on earth ... and relished it too greedily, to forget it in one generation’.<sup>119</sup> The French desire for glory through military conquest consequently followed from the people’s desire to replicate the particular pinnacle of French glory, the career of Napoleon I.

For conservatives, what sort of ambition was dominant in a country was consequently not linked to any national character, but contingent and changeable. Indeed, this malleability caused significant anxiety among conservative commentators as the Franco-Prussian war drew to a close. Germany had always had its prestige, through excelling in the pursuits of culture. Conservatives feared, however, that now, after a heady taste of the glory accruing to their decisive victory over France, the Germans might become enamoured of military glory and persist in its pursuit.<sup>120</sup> Conservative commentators wondered anxiously as to the path ‘which Prussian ambition will take in the future’.<sup>121</sup> Would the Prussian statesmen, after their military success, continue on this course of conquest? Or would they take a moderate course, reject aggressive war,

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(1871b: 359-60).

<sup>114</sup> Lever (1871d: 367).

<sup>115</sup> Cecil (1864a: 238-9); (1870: 542); Hamley (1871c: 495).

<sup>116</sup> Hamley (1862b: 534).

<sup>117</sup> Varouxakis (2002a: 134-5).

<sup>118</sup> Cecil (1859: 9).

<sup>119</sup> Cecil (1859: 10).

<sup>120</sup> Cecil (1870: 546, 554-6); Hamley (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 488-90, 495).

<sup>121</sup> Wilson (1871b: 373); see also Cecil (1864a: 238-9, 242, 260); (1870: 546, 550-1, 554-5); Dasent (1870: 299); Gleig (1870b: 662); Hamley (1870c: 784-6); (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 488-90, 495); Lever (1870c: 510);

and 'settle down to the pursuits of peace'?<sup>122</sup>

### The role of military glory in international politics

While conservatives thought of military prestige as genuine glory, they observed that the desire for military glory lay at the root of many of the conflicts of international relations. The characterisation of Russia's policy towards the Ottoman Empire in these terms might not be surprising, and, in common with other Victorians, the imputation of a desire for military glory held pride of place in conservatives' understanding of the French attitude to Europe.<sup>123</sup> More tellingly, conservatives also identified such a desire for glory as the motivation behind the unifications of Italy and Germany.

Conservative commentators argued that the unification of Italy under Piedmont was propelled not by the stated aim to liberate Italy and relieve the suffering of its peoples, but by Piedmont's ambition to gain glory through the absorption of the other Italian states. Conservatives initially painted Piedmont as almost delusionally aggressive. They stated that Piedmont's desire for territorial expansion was so strong that this 'unprincipled ambition' threatened to overwhelm its prudence – it desired aggrandisement to the point that it was willing 'in reckless venture' to involve Napoleon III, thereby running the all too real risk of the loss, to France, of its autonomy and independence.<sup>124</sup> As the unification of Italy unfolded, conservatives presented the course of events as the result of the 'ambitious projects [and] restless intrigues' of Cavour and Napoleon III.<sup>125</sup> Eventually, Cavour gained control of the other polities of Italy by outwitting and out-scheming both Napoleon III and the other statesmen of Italy. The notion of 'national independence', Lever argued, was a sham: merely meaningless rhetoric through which Cavour had manipulated the revolutionary movement for his own ends – for the glory of Piedmont through its hegemony over the rest of Italy.<sup>126</sup>

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Wilson (1870: 391-2); (1871a: 87, 91-2); (1871b: 366, 369-70).

<sup>122</sup> Cecil (1870: 550).

<sup>123</sup> Conservative accounts of the French differed in their details – whether they talked of the mass of people in general, or of particular classes: the army and clergy, or the army and peasants versus the bourgeoisie – but their conclusion was always that effectively the French people demanded military glory and territorial aggrandisement for France, desiring it to be the hegemon of Europe. See Cecil (1859: 6-9, 12-13, 16-7); Forsyth (1861: 173-5); Oliphant (1860a: 364); Patterson (1859a: 384); (1860: 75-8); (1862a: 246-7, 255); Swayne (1859: 752, 755); (1861: 81, 83-4). See further Varouxakis (2002a: 132) on general British opinion on the French.

<sup>124</sup> Tremenheere (1859: 264) and Atkinson (1859: 350). See also Cecil (1859: 5); Hardman (1859: 617, 620-1, 623); Malmesbury (1859d); (1859e); Patterson (1859a: 376, 386); Tremenheere (1859: 261-2, 264-6).

<sup>125</sup> Forsyth (1861: 141). See also Forsyth (1861: 133-4, 140-1, 143, 165, 170); Lever (1863b: 661-4); Patterson (1862c: 504-5, 507, 521). See also the *Morning Herald* (April 17, 1860).

<sup>126</sup> Lever (1863c: 54); see also Hardman (1865: 673-4); Lever (1863b: 656-7, 660, 665); (1863c: 59-60);

Conservatives similarly considered the cause of German unification to lie in a Prussian desire for aggrandisement. They emphasised that Bismarck did not 'care one straw for German unity', but was interested instead in the 'ascendancy of Prussia in Germany'.<sup>127</sup> 'The events between 1863 and 1870 must be looked upon', Cecil asserted, 'as one transaction – as successive acts of the great drama of Prussian aggrandisement'.<sup>128</sup> And conservatives thought that the motivation of the small states, too, lay not in an intrinsic desire for national unification. Unity was merely a necessary means to glory. Only by 'confiding to the charge of Prussia its ambitions ... its diplomacy ... its glory, its external force and aggrandisement' could the small German states hope to realise any of their ambitions.<sup>129</sup> The desire for glory lay at the basis of most crises in international relations.

### The attitudes of statesmen

Conservatives discerned two different attitudes which statesmen could take regarding the European sphere, aggressive and moderate, as reflected in the choice to pursue glory either through military or through non-military means. Statesmen would ordinarily hold an attitude of 'moderation' and have a 'pacific disposition'.<sup>130</sup> Moderation meant that, whereas the aggressive attitude implied aiming at military hegemony and absolute dominance, the moderate attitude recognised the independence of other states and accepted the necessity of settlements and a degree of compromise regarding a state's interests – which would still be vigorously asserted.<sup>131</sup> A pacific disposition, meanwhile, meant that statesmen would be concerned to avoid the 'horrors of war'.<sup>132</sup> They would aim 'to have as few enemies as possible, and to maintain universal peace ... [and] the tranquillity of the world'.<sup>133</sup> If they did enter into war, any conflicts would be limited, fought over particular interests, not for the glory of victory itself or for wholesale dominance over the other country. When taking a moderate, pacific attitude, statesmen

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(1863d: 451-4).

<sup>127</sup> Swayne (1867: 197) and Wilson (1871a: 78). See also Cecil (1864a: 252-3); Dasent (1870: 294, 297); Oliphant (1864a: 394, 396); (1864b: 503); (1865: 122); Patterson (1864a: 130); (1864b: 641); Wilson (1871a: 81-82).

<sup>128</sup> Cecil (1870: 545).

<sup>129</sup> Wilson (1871a: 90); see also Hamley (1870c: 784).

<sup>130</sup> For 'moderation', Cecil (1864a: 239), Dasent (1870: 313), and Oliphant (1864b: 511); see also Cecil (1870: 540, 542); Dasent (1870: 327). For 'pacific disposition', Cecil (1864a: 238); see also Cecil (1870: 543); Gleig (1870b: 662, 664); (1871: 119); Hamley (1871a: 240); (1871c: 504); Lever (1870c: 509); Patterson (1864a: 132); Wilson (1871b: 369-70, 373).

<sup>131</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1864a: 239); Oliphant (1864b: 518). For further analysis of conservative thought on interests and their interaction in international politics, see chapter III.

<sup>132</sup> Dasent (1870: 301); see also e.g. Hamley (1871c: 503-4).

<sup>133</sup> Oliphant (1864a: 383); see also e.g. Hamley (1871a: 240).

would consequently attempt to calibrate the conflicting interests of the great powers so they could avoid getting embroiled in military conflict.<sup>134</sup>

A moderate attitude still implied, however, an active involvement of the country in international politics in pursuit of its own interests. Conservatives used the notions of moderation and a pacific disposition as an explicit contrast to an attitude of outright aggression; they were not meant to convey the likelihood or desirability of a self-effacing, isolationist, or pacifist attitude. A concern over the country's interests, great power politics, or general order and stability could still lead a moderate statesman to decide on the use of force.

Conservatives also emphasised that the moderate attitude was at basis still a self-interested one — there was no general European interest to which each particular country was expected to defer.<sup>135</sup> While peace was generally in the interests of most countries, peace and stability as such were, for conservatives, not quite ends in themselves, but only to be pursued to the extent that they furthered the rightful ends of international politics, the interests and honour of one's country.<sup>136</sup> For instance, conservatives argued that Britain had many commercial interests, which meant that in general the British cause was served by tranquillity and order in Europe.<sup>137</sup> Tranquillity depended on equilibrium among the great powers, so, conservatives concluded, British statesmen should involve themselves in European affairs with the aim to 'preserve the European balance of power'.<sup>138</sup>

During the Franco-Prussian war, for instance, conservative commentators linked a moderate, self-interested policy course with a focus on peace and order.<sup>139</sup> Several conservatives noted that Britain had selfish reasons for her 'attitude of proud neutrality' combined with an 'unmixed condemnation of the war' between France and Prussia.<sup>140</sup> Britain took this position of 'mock philanthropy' because war inconvenienced 'her peaceful schemes' and 'her vision of prosperity'.<sup>141</sup> Near the end of the war, too, W.G. Hamley argued that Britain had plenty of selfish reasons to become more assertive in Europe — this was needed to defend her own interests — but that because

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<sup>134</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1864a: 239); Dasent (1870: 300-2); Wilson (1871a: 83).

<sup>135</sup> Gleig (1866: 648); Wilson (1871a: 83).

<sup>136</sup> Oliphant (1864a: 383).

<sup>137</sup> Cecil (1864a: 284); (1870: 545); Oliphant (1864a: 383).

<sup>138</sup> Wilson (1870: 388); see also Cecil (1864a: 238).

<sup>139</sup> The Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) between the France of Napoleon III and Bismarck's Prussia was quickly and decisively won by Prussia and the German states, to the surprise of most observers. The war ended Napoleon III's reign and galvanised the unification of Germany under Prussian leadership.

<sup>140</sup> Lever (1871c: 173) and Hamley (1870a: 385).

<sup>141</sup> Lever (1870c: 510) and Hamley (1870a: 385); see also Hamley (1871a: 245); Oliphant (1864a: 383).

British assertiveness would also induce Germany to refrain from continuing on a path of conquest, it would also be in the common interest of Europe.<sup>142</sup> The moderate British course of action was both self-interested and beneficial to Europe. It contrasted, conservatives argued, with the self-aggrandising policies adopted at the time by Russia and Italy, who furthered their interests by taking advantage of the turmoil to respectively abandon treaty obligations and annex territories.<sup>143</sup>

### The aggressive attitude

While conservatives considered a moderate attitude to be the default disposition of statesmen, they paid far more attention to its troubling alternative. Conservatives often discussed the possibility of statesmen starting out on a path of aggrandisement, making their country an 'aggressive Power'.<sup>144</sup> An aggressive state, conservatives thought, was concerned with military glory, territorial expansion, and possibly even hegemony over Europe. Such a state would bring conflict and instability to its neighbourhood, which was how conservative commentators for instance viewed Piedmont's 'intrigue' in the Italian peninsula in 1859-61.<sup>145</sup> If the state in question were powerful enough, such a course of territorial aggrandisement could then blossom into a project to gain hegemony over Europe, as conservatives feared Russia desired during the Crimean War and France desired in the late 1850s and early 1860s. In all its different manifestations, the aggressive attitude, as characterised by conservatives, implied first of all a view of war as not only a viable, but even the preferred means of foreign policy, and, through its connection to military glory, as an end in itself.

Conservatives were sensitive to any indication of an aggressive attitude held by statesmen of a great power. If any of the great powers turned aggressive the focus of international politics would shift from the realisation or loss of particular interests and the limited conflicts over them, to the mere exercise of 'war, or the preparation of war' and possibly putting at stake even 'the independence of the other European powers'.<sup>146</sup> Moreover, the disputes over territory and hegemony which an aggressive state created were, Cecil noted, not 'likely to be appeased by compromise. It is that perpetual form of

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<sup>142</sup> Hamley (1871c: 495-6). William Hamley (1815-1893) was an army officer who became colonel in 1866 and retired in 1872. C. Hamley and E.B. Hamley were his brothers (Boase 1965).

<sup>143</sup> Hamley (1871c: 505-6); Lever (1871a: 230); (1871f: 729).

<sup>144</sup> Gleig (1870b: 662); see also Cecil (1864a: 238); (1870: 544, 554-5); Dasent (1870: 294, 297, 299); Gleig (1871: 119); Hamley (1870c: 784-6); (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 490-1, 495, 503-4); Lever (1870c: 509); Swayne (1867: 197); Wilson (1870: 391); (1871a: 87, 90).

<sup>145</sup> Forsyth (1861: 141). See also Forsyth (1861: 133-4, 140-1, 143, 165, 170); Lever (1863b: 661-4); Patterson (1862c: 504-5, 507, 521). See also the *Morning Herald* (April 17, 1860).



quarrel which, in its nature, is irreconcilable, and which must always exist between those who wish to conquer and those who desire not to be conquered'.<sup>147</sup> The ordinary politics of interests and compromise were replaced by a violent, general struggle over territory, independence, and the European order itself.

In fielding the notion of an aggressive power embarking on a course of systematic aggrandisement, conservatives consciously referred to a long established narrative on the possibility of extra-ordinary aggression, of attempts to overturn the European order. In this situation, a king or country desired ultimate glory in hegemony over Europe and tried to gain this end through the military defeat of the other states.<sup>148</sup> This narrative recalled the various claims to universal monarchy of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, which had culminated, in the minds of these conservatives, in the first Napoleon's attempts to become emperor of Europe.<sup>149</sup>

This spectre of Napoleon's quest for universal dominion and of the 'Great War' which had been necessary to end his career was a pervasive presence in the thought of conservative commentators on international affairs. When they thought a great power was possibly adopting an aggressive attitude, they presented this as a chance that 'the world is to see a repetition of the Napoleonic conquests', plunging Europe into large-scale war with widespread suffering and disruption.<sup>150</sup> Any evidence of an aggressive attitude among the great powers ought consequently, conservatives argued, to galvanise Britain into forming a coalition to constrain the potential aggressor.

Over the course of mid-Victorian international affairs, conservatives invoked these concerns frequently. They presented even the American North in a narrative in which 'what they called their 'manifest destiny' was territorial aggrandisement' and 'the dream of universal dominion', if over the North American continent rather than over Europe.<sup>151</sup> Conservative commentators portrayed the Crimean War primarily as an intervention necessary to prevent Russian hegemony over certainly Eastern Europe, and possibly the whole continent.<sup>152</sup> The Black Sea affair of 1870-71 was then a

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<sup>146</sup> Cecil (1870: 545) and Wilson (1870: 391); see also Cecil (1864a: 248).

<sup>147</sup> Cecil (1864a: 275-6).

<sup>148</sup> See e.g. Hamley (1870c: 784).

<sup>149</sup> See e.g. Butterfield (1966: 140-1); Little (2007: 4); Mandelbaum (1988: 8); Pollard (1923: 53-4); Schroeder (1994: 9); Sheehan (1996: 37, 97).

<sup>150</sup> Dasent (1870: 313); see also Gleig (1870b: 662); Hamley (1870c: 784); (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 490); Lever (1870c: 510-1); Wilson (1870: 391-2); (1871b: 366).

<sup>151</sup> Forsyth (1862: 274-5) and Mackay (1866a: 31). See also Beresford Hope (1862: 78); (1863: 40); Cecil (1861: 248); (1865: 252, 263, 272); Forsyth (1862: 259-263, 272, 276); Hamley (1862b: 533-4); (1862c: 661); (1863b: 651); Montagu (1861: 30); Patterson (1862b: 696, 710); Spence (1861: 295-9; 313-4); (1862: 11-2); Wolseley (1863: 10, 24).

<sup>152</sup> Alison (1855: 135); Disraeli (1855: 1737); Elwin (1854: 295, 299); C. Hamley (1855a: 644-5); (1855b:

confirmation of this perennial Russian policy of aggrandisement.<sup>153</sup> By the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78, the main focus of conservatives had shifted to the threat to the route to India, but they continued to invoke the possibility of Russian hegemony in their calls for an assertive British policy.<sup>154</sup>

In the intervening decades, they had focused on the France of Napoleon III as likely involved in a grand project aiming at universal dominion over Europe. Conservatives, like most Britons, saw Napoleon III as involved in Italian affairs with the aims to gain military glory, dominion over the peninsula, and immediate territorial aggrandisement. This conclusion they reiterated again and again: from the run-up to the war to the peace of Villa-Franca,<sup>155</sup> with the cession of Savoy and Nice,<sup>156</sup> when Garibaldi marched on Rome,<sup>157</sup> right through to commentaries on the state of affairs in Italy after unification.<sup>158</sup> Conservative commentators moreover argued that Napoleon III's involvement in Italian affairs ought to be understood as merely one part of a grander course of aggressive ambition and territorial aggrandisement, which had started with the Crimean war and was projected into the future, culminating in a bid for French hegemony over the continent. Patterson developed this argument most extensively: in a series of articles and a book he argued that Napoleon III 'aims to attain for her [France] the position of despotic arbiter in the affairs of Europe'.<sup>159</sup>

By the time this possibility had been forestalled by Prussia's victory over France in 1870, conservatives were already preoccupied with speculation and worry over whether the new imperial Germany would continue on its decade-long course of aggression. For these conservative commentators, the ends which Prussia pursued during the Danish Duchies affair only made sense if they had the long-term ambition to

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144); E.B. Hamley (1855c: 353); Libri and Guizot (1855: 494, 499-500); Lytton (1855: 1392); Mildmay (1853: 26-7); Patterson (1855a: 107-8); (1855b: 231); (1855c: 633-4); Swayne (1854a: 592).

<sup>153</sup> *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 16, p. 4); (Nov. 17, p. 4); (Nov. 19, p. 4); (Dec. 5, p. 4); *Manners* (1871: 948-9); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 15, p. 4); (Nov. 17, p. 4); (Nov. 19, p. 4); (Nov. 22, p. 4); (Nov. 24, p. 4); (Nov. 25, p. 4); (Nov. 26, p. 4); (Nov. 28, p. 4).

<sup>154</sup> Craik and Smith (1877: 299-300, 307); Keppel (1878: 536, 568-70); Patterson (1878: 486, 498); Russell (1877: 212, 240); Smith and Layard (1877: 302-3).

<sup>155</sup> Cecil (1859: 1); Hardman (1859: 618-9); Patterson (1859a: 382, 385); Tremenheere (1859: 244). For favourable accounts of Austria as the reasonable party in the conflict, see Cecil (1859: 2, 11); Forsyth (1861: 143-4); Patterson (1862c: 506); Tremenheere (1859: 266).

<sup>156</sup> Forsyth (1860: 107); (1861: 133-5, 142); Oliphant (1860a: 362-3); (1860b: 638, 641, 643, 649-50); (1860c: 735, 742-4).

<sup>157</sup> Patterson (1862c: 503-4, 508, 513).

<sup>158</sup> Lever (1863a: 583); (1863b: 655, 661-3); (1863c: 54-5, 64).

<sup>159</sup> Patterson (1859a: 382); see also Aytoun (1860: 245, 247, 252); Cecil (1859: 1); Forsyth (1861: 173-5); Oliphant (1860b: 649-50); (1860c: 740); Patterson (1859a: 390); (1859b: 375, 379); (1860: 11-12, 63, 69-74, 80-83, 90-1, 107-8, 112, 125-6); (1862b: 260); (1862c: 518); Stanley (1861: 165, 177). A common enough concern among British liberals, too. But see the discussion in the section immediately below for differences which conservatives emphasised.

establish an empire through aggression: 'unless some ambitious motive were at the bottom', Cecil concluded, 'the whole transaction would be one of the mysteries of history'.<sup>160</sup> During the Danish Duchies affair conservative commentators were disapproving of this ambition, but not particularly concerned. This attitude changed markedly after the events of Sadowa and the Franco-Prussian war. Bismarck had fashioned Prussia into the leader of a German empire, which was clearly a great power. The attitude taken by the statesmen of this new Power, conservatives thought, would be of crucial importance for the future of the European sphere and the likelihood of large-scale war.<sup>161</sup> The possibility of a fellow great power adopting an aggressive attitude was a major preoccupation of conservative commentators, a lens which coloured their perception of any particular issue in international politics.

Parry argues that in considering liberal commentary on international politics, the historian does not need to bother much with Victorian attitudes towards particular nationalities and cultures. Because 'the collective recoil was against the same thing: an ideologically alien regime with expansionist, threatening intentions. At times when politicians presented Russia, France or Austria as a threat to Britain, the similarities in the presentation of each outweighed the differences; the emphasis was on general stereotypes of bureau and barrack at odds with English liberty'.<sup>162</sup> Conservatives cared not about the ideology of foreign regimes, but also evinced such a 'collective recoil ... against the same thing'. Their worries were not autocracy and militarism, but rather statesmen taking an aggressive attitude, pursuing military glory, or even embarking on a bid for hegemony over Europe.

#### Ambition, glory, and the attitude of British Liberals

There was one set of statesmen whose attitude to international affairs conservatives did not characterise through this framework of aggression and moderation — these were the British liberal and radical politicians. Conservatives presented theirs as aberrant attitudes. Liberals and radicals, they complained, either lacked ambition, not desiring glory for Britain and favouring isolationism, or they had the wrong ambition, thinking that the realisation of certain ethical ideals would bring glory to Britain. Conservatives

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<sup>160</sup> Cecil (1864a: 242; see also Cecil (1864a: 239-40, 248, 275); Oliphant (1864a: 391-2); Patterson (1864a: 129).

<sup>161</sup> Cecil (1870: 545-6, 550-1, 554-5); Dasent (1870: 298, 312-4); Gleig (1870b: 662); Hamley (1870c: 784-6); (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 488-90, 495); Lever (1870c: 510); Wilson (1870: 373-4, 391-2); (1871a: 91-2); (1871b: 369-70, 373).

<sup>162</sup> Parry (2006: 14).

argued that both attitudes resulted in a problematic foreign policy.

Conservatives thought that statesmen ought to be ambitious for their country. They consequently criticised liberals and radicals such as Cobden who, conservatives complained, were only concerned with commerce and penny-pinching. This irked conservatives, for whom the glory of Britain was of as great importance as its prosperity. Lever argued, for instance, that there was an ambition for glory in which 'men's thoughts soared to something above a balance sheet, and dreamed that a nation was a greater thing than a counting house'.<sup>163</sup> Only men's ambition, Lever continued, would 'drive them from the pursuits of material profit to speculative projects and daring achievements'.<sup>164</sup> In the case of Britain this glory was expressed above all in its empire. A proper consideration of the importance of glory would consequently, conservatives asserted, lead to a foreign policy where concerns over economy would not be allowed to impact the vigour and security of the empire.<sup>165</sup> Cobden and people like him, however, favoured isolationism: Britain focusing on its prosperity and leaving continental politics alone. Conservatives strongly disapproved. They argued that isolationism was short-sighted and pernicious, because it relinquished British influence on the three ends of international politics: safeguarding Britain's interests, maintaining a secure diplomatic position among the great powers, and preserving the general stability and order of Europe. Not only would Cobdenite isolationism thus imperil the glory and security of Britain, it would, conservatives thought, even come to undermine the basis for the very prosperity which the Cobdenites valued, as Britain's interests would no longer be given due account in international politics.

Liberals also made the distinction between glory from peaceful pursuits and from military victory, but, unlike conservatives, generally rejected military glory as hollow, as undeserving of genuine respect. Instead, liberals discerned a different source of glory for a country in international affairs. They thought that a country would gain glory for itself by disinterestedly realising certain overarching, generally affirmed ethical ideals in its foreign policy, such as Christian humanitarianism, constitutional liberty and, in certain contexts, national self-determination. For most liberals, Britain's prestige rested on its leadership in facilitating the spread of these liberal values across the continent.<sup>166</sup> Conservative commentators rejected this notion of glory. They thought

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<sup>163</sup> Lever (1871a: 236).

<sup>164</sup> Lever (1871a: 236); see also Cecil (1864a: 238).

<sup>165</sup> Cecil (1864b: 521-2); Gleig (1866: 642); Hamley (1870c: 786-7).

<sup>166</sup> See e.g. Parry (2006: 8-10, 240-41, 327, 335); Varouxakis (2006b: 102).

that liberal values held little purchase among continental statesmen. In practice they were merely a veneer of legitimation for a *de facto* course of territorial aggrandisement; they were 'a mask assumed to serve a purpose ... [of] war and conquest'.<sup>167</sup> Conservatives saw liberals as being taken in by these spurious appeals to their values and thereby encouraging aggression and disorder on the continent. In the case of France and Piedmont, for instance, liberals and radicals had consequently condoned or applauded, as a result of their fixation on supposedly universal moral principles, what was in fact, in the eyes of conservatives, a course of aggression and territorial aggrandisement on the continent.

### **Reason, passion, and the roles of statesmen and the people**

As they debated international affairs and British foreign policy, conservatives tried to establish a sense that there were two different realms from which to perceive and to act by conflating two sets of terms in their analysis. Conservatives indicated a realm of reason, pragmatism, and practical knowledge, which they opposed to a realm of sentiment, ideals, and theoretical abstractions.<sup>168</sup> Conservatives generally associated the moderate attitude towards international politics with a state of affairs where reason was the foundation of foreign policy. Conversely, they thought that military ambition and an aggressive attitude were generally a departure from reason and often informed by passion and sentiment. They also equated a foreign policy based in reason with a foreign policy aimed at, firstly, realising the 'interests' of the country and, secondly, maintaining the stature and 'honour' of the state.<sup>169</sup> They furthermore made a distinction between statesmen as bearers of reason and the general populace as creatures of passion and sentiment. Statesmen were the agents of international politics, but, given the possibilities of pandering and demagoguery, both reason and emotion influenced the flow of international politics.

#### Reason in foreign policy: interests, honour, and war

Although conservative commentators strongly emphasised that 'purpose' in foreign

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<sup>167</sup> Hardman (1859: 618-9). See also Atkinson (1859: 352); Aytoun (247-8); Cecil (1859: 1, 16-17); (1862: 235); Forsyth (1860: 108); (1861: 147); Oliphant (1860a: 360); (1860c: 738); Patterson (1859a: 388); (1860: 13-14, 94-9); (1862c: 504); Tremenhare (1859: 244, 247-8).

<sup>168</sup> While conservative commentators were happy to lay claim to all reason, in fact they often conflated the concept with common sense, i.e. that which was practically reasonable. Hence its opposition not only to passion but also to theoretical abstractions, such as Gladstone's idea of Public Right.

<sup>169</sup> See e.g. Gleig (1866: 642, 649, 656); Hamley (1870c: 788); Lever (1871a: 230); Patterson (1864b: 639); Swayne (1867: 198).

policy rested on 'interests', they rarely went into any detail on the characteristics of interests.<sup>170</sup> In general terms, though, a foreign policy identified by conservatives as in pursuit of a country's interests could pertain to the country's security, prosperity, or great power status. Concern for particular interests segued into concern for the position of Britain in the scheme of great power politics, which were then both set against a backdrop of general order and stability in Europe.<sup>171</sup>

Conservatives connected a foreign policy based in reason with the pursuit of interests which were for every country 'peculiar to itself'.<sup>172</sup> They assumed that this pursuit, when reasoned, happened in a spirit of compromise and (coerced) settlement, rather than in a spirit of intractable enmity and absolute gain or loss.<sup>173</sup> Conservatives sustained this narrative of limited interests even during the Crimean War, the one European war in which Britain was involved during the Victorian era.<sup>174</sup> They rejected the liberal perception of a grand struggle between progressive liberal trends and autocratic reaction.<sup>175</sup> Conservatives asserted that the Tsar ought to be viewed not as a bugbear intent on the destruction of European liberties, but merely as a rational statesman trying to act in the best interests of his country – with no particular blame for the war happening.<sup>176</sup> Conservatives did perceive a Russian threat to the balance of power, if it were to gain a dominant position in Central Europe. But this was the old general threat to the independence of states, not the more particular, newly perceived threat to the liberal, constitutional nature of their self-government.<sup>177</sup> The conflict, conservatives asserted, should be seen as one between states with different interests, not

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<sup>170</sup> Patterson (1864a: 123).

<sup>171</sup> Cecil (1864a: 238, 284); (1870: 545); Oliphant (1864a: 383, 395); Wilson (1870: 388).

<sup>172</sup> Patterson (1864a: 114).

<sup>173</sup> Cecil (1864a: 239); Dasent (1870: 301); Gleig (1866: 650); Lever (1872: 365); Oliphant (1864b: 518); Patterson (1864a: 126). Interests and settlements are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

<sup>174</sup> The Crimean War (1854-56) was a conflict between Russia and France, Britain, and the Ottoman Empire, with the Anglo-French siege of Sevastopol as its most important campaign. Conservative contributions to British debates on the war focused, roughly chronologically, on why Britain ought to involve itself in the conflict; how and why the dispute had deteriorated into war; why Britain's military performed poorly; and what lessons ought to be drawn from the conflict, especially regarding assertive statesmanship and proper military funding.

<sup>175</sup> For liberals' presentation of the conflict through this lens, see e.g. Parry (2006: 212, 214, 218). See also Porter (1984: 426-7). Note that Patterson (1855a) adopted the progressive narrative as yet another stick with which to beat the Aberdeen government for inaction, but rejected the progressive perspective as misleading in subsequent articles.

<sup>176</sup> Alison (1855: 135); Disraeli (1855: 1737); Mildmay (1853: 30-1); Patterson (1855a: 107-8); Swayne (1854a: 591-2). See also Hicks (2007: 146).

<sup>177</sup> For the most sustained argument, see Patterson (1855a: 107-8); <sup>177177</sup> (1855b: 231); (1855c: 633-5, 643-4); (1856a: 611). See also Alison (1855: 135); Disraeli (1855: 1737); Elwin (1854: 295, 299); C. Hamley (1855a: 644-5); (1855b: 144); E.B. Hamley (1855c: 353); Libri and Guizot (1855: 494, 499-500); Lytton (1855: 1392); Mildmay (1853: 26-7); Swayne (1854a: 592).

as a grand struggle of the forces of progress in Europe against those of reaction.<sup>178</sup>

Conservatives were wary of predicating a war on such general, emotive terms. These would involve far more expansive military operations, which implied both a direct cost in money and lives, and the ever abhorred likelihood of the conflict evolving into a general European war. 'War', Swayne stated, 'is not a subject of love or hate, any more than the cholera' raging in the British and French camps.<sup>179</sup> The war was not, they implied, based on a general antagonism between Britain and Russia. Consequently, the war aims ought to be limited too; the goal was to achieve the coercion of Russia, for it to concede on this particular issue – Britain was not to aim for a comprehensive defeat of Russia.<sup>180</sup> Conservatives consequently thought that the destruction of Russia's Black Sea fleet and its military port at Sevastopol were rightly the main focus of the British and French war effort.<sup>181</sup>

This conservative approach to resolving the conflict and securing the balance of power contrasted instructively with Palmerston's preferred method of containing Russia. Palmerston rejected the constrained scope for the conflict advocated by conservatives, and hoped to limit Russia's ability to act as a major European power. This, he thought, could be achieved through a transformation of the map of Europe along somewhat national lines – to the extent that such a reconfiguration would inconvenience Russia. He imagined fomenting nationalist insurrections resulting in a newly independent state of Poland and a Sweden enlarged with Russian territories, and considered that Italy might as well be made independent while he was 'redrawing the map of Europe'.<sup>182</sup>

Conservative thought on this matter was consequently distinct, even from the vision of a person who also valued the importance of force and the balance of power in international affairs, in that conservatives conceptualised the war as a strictly

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<sup>178</sup> E.B. Hamley (1856a: 241); Hardman (1858: 85); Libri and Guizot (1855: 494); Lytton (1855: 1388-90); Oliphant (1856: 485); Patterson (1855c: 632, 636); (1856b: 730, 732); Swayne (1854a: 591-2).

<sup>179</sup> Swayne (1854b: 717). George.C. Swayne (1818-1892) was a schoolmaster and clergyman (Boase 1965).

<sup>180</sup> Cecil (1855: 1600-2); Disraeli (1855: 1731, 1733-4, 1740); Disraeli in Baumgart (1981: 191); E.B. Hamley (1855e: 617); (1856a: 238-9, 241); Libri and Guizot (1855: 494); Lytton (1855: 1379-80, 1390-1); Northcote (1855: 1442); Patterson (1855a: 103); (1855c: 632, 636, 642); (1856a: 615, 620); Swayne (1854a: 591-2); (1854b: 718); (1855b: 186).

<sup>181</sup> Disraeli (1855: 1731, 1735); Disraeli in Baumgart (1981: 191); E.B. Hamley (1855c: 353); (1855i: 260); (1855k: 627); Lytton (1855: 1381-3); Northcote (1855: 1442); Patterson (1855b: 241-2); (1855c: 632); Oliphant (1856: 485). For more detail on the rationale behind the exact, limited war aims advocated by conservative commentators, see Aytoun (1854: 608-11, 615); C. Hamley (1855c: 428, 433); E.B. Hamley (1855i: 260); Lytton (1855: 1391-2); Swayne (1855a: 111); see also e.g. Disraeli (1855: 1737-8) and Hardman (1858) discussing the future of the Principalities, and Oliphant (1856) and Swayne (1855b) discussing the Caucasus.

<sup>182</sup> A characterisation of Palmerston's vision as written down by Russell, quoted in Baumgart (1981: 14-

constrained conflict. Even with Britain caught up in war, conservative commentators maintained their call for what they saw as a reasoned rather than emotive foreign policy, arguing for only those limited means and ends necessary to assuage the particular concerns which had drawn Britain into the conflict.

Conservatives thought that statesmen who based their foreign policy in reason would be concerned not only with the interests of the country, but also with honour, or stature.<sup>183</sup> Stature was about being effective in foreign policy. For conservatives, stature was the reputation which a state had for standing up for itself, for defending its interests.<sup>184</sup> For liberals, stature lay in the recognition by other states of the moral weight of Britain, of its ability to realise liberal values in international politics.<sup>185</sup>

From the conservatives' perspective, an honourable country would take a reasoned position regarding its interests and could be counted upon to stick by this position, even when matters would come to a head. Stature and honour were thus associated by conservatives with vigour and resoluteness, and a foreign policy based in reason and foresight. Anyone who cared about their country would surely, conservatives assumed, want these qualities to be ascribed to its behaviour in the international sphere. Conservatives consequently criticised the foreign policy of liberal statesmen, who seemed ever too vacillating and irresolute, and increasingly concerned merely with the commercial implications of any action or inaction.<sup>186</sup> Liberal statesmen, these conservatives argued, did not care about the honour of Britain, did not care whether Britons could think of themselves as being a robust presence in international affairs, a great power actively securing its interests.

Conservatives repeatedly invoked the honour of Britain as a primary concern for its foreign policy. Near the end of the Crimean War, they identified British honour as one of the reasons in favour of continuing the war; if the conflict were extended another year, Britain would surely gain some significant victories without French aid, in the Baltic or the Caucasus, and could thus firmly re-establish her stature among the states of Europe.<sup>187</sup> During the Danish Duchies affair, conservatives argued that the mismatch between 'Lord Russell's fierce notes and pacific measures' had damaged the

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<sup>183</sup> Hamley (1871c: 501-2). The instrumental role of honour in international politics is treated in the next chapter. Here it is discussed as an end in itself.

<sup>184</sup> See e.g. Patterson (1864c: 244).

<sup>185</sup> Gladstone (1870: 593). See also Parry (2006: 283).

<sup>186</sup> Cecil (1864a: 286); (1864b: 516, 524, 528); Hamley (1870c: 784, 786); (1871c: 488, 492-3); Lever (1871a: 236); Patterson (1864b: 641, 648).

<sup>187</sup> Beresford Hope (1855: 27); E.B. Hamley (1855j: 520); (1855k: 631); (1856a: 239); Lytton (1855: 1378);



stature of Britain among states.<sup>188</sup> During the American Civil War the various disputes between Britain and the North did not, for conservatives, revolve around abstract issues such as international law; rather, 'the national honour was at stake'.<sup>189</sup> Conservatives asserted that any compliance with Northern demands be presented as the forbearance of a superior power, not the timidity of a retiring state.<sup>190</sup> Conveying this impression was essential to maintaining the stature of Britain as a first-rate power, 'proud in its independence, sensitive for its honour, and able and willing to hold its own against all comers'.<sup>191</sup> Finally, conservative commentators reacted violently to Russia's abrogation of Black Sea neutrality in 1870 because they again thought that Britain's honour was in peril.<sup>192</sup> For liberals, the Black Sea affair revolved around the role and proper workings of treaties in international affairs.<sup>193</sup> Conservative commentators engaged somewhat with this liberal debate, but their focus was elsewhere.<sup>194</sup> 'As the question is now put to us', *The Standard* declared, 'it is a far more vital one than that of our interests in the East; it is the question of our honour – of our existence as a great Power'.<sup>195</sup>

While conservatives considered moderation and compromise to be important elements of a rational foreign policy, they also affirmed that war was still a possible

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Patterson (1856a: 609-10, 623); Swayne (1854b: 721); (1856: 389).

<sup>188</sup> Cecil (1864a: 285); see also Cecil (1864b: 481-2, 516, 518, 520, 522, 524-5); (1871: 284); Gleig (1866: 649); Lever (1869: 357, 359); (1871a: 236); (1870b: 601); Oliphant (1864a: 383-4, 394); (1865: 118); Patterson (1864a: 113); (1864b: 638, 640-5, 648); (1864c: 244); Swayne (1867: 195); Wilson (1870: 381). The Danish Duchies affair (1864) was a dispute between Denmark and the German states over the future of Schleswig and Holstein, provinces both part of Denmark but with a significant German population, and a complicated diplomatic history. Denmark attempted to include the provinces in a single constitutional order with the rest of Denmark, the German population protested, the German states got involved, and in the end Prussia and Austria went to war with Denmark and conquered both provinces. Prussia would gain control of both after the brief 1866 Austro-Prussian war.

<sup>189</sup> Forsyth (1862: 274). For liberals' focus on international law, see e.g. Varouxakis (2013: 26-40). Conservative contributions to British debates on the American civil war focused mostly on the possibility of recognition for the South, and on the various disputes which Britain had with the North, and which brought them close to conflict. The first and most serious of these was the Trent affair (late in 1861), in which the Northern navy seized and imprisoned two Southern envoys from a British mail carrier, the *Trent*. The second major dispute revolved around the Alabama and other ships commissioned by the South from British wharfs, which went on to raid Northern shipping. The North wanted Britain to impound the ships under construction and the British government eventually complied, if only after the Alabama, in particular, had already set sail.

<sup>190</sup> Beresford Hope (1862: 43, 115-6); Cecil (1862: 535, 568, 570); Hamley (1862a: 120); (1863b: 636-8, 646-7); (1864a: 458); Spence (1861: 304-5); (1862: 10-11); Wolseley (1863: 25).

<sup>191</sup> Hamley (1863b: 636-7). See also Cecil (1862: 568); (1865: 250-1); Clarendon cited in Crook (1974: 131); Forsyth (1862: 259); Hamley (1861a: 130); (1862a: 130); (1863b: 639, 651-2); (1864a: 458-9).

<sup>192</sup> The Black Sea affair of November 1870 revolved around Britain's reaction to Russia's abrogation of the neutrality of the Black Sea, one of Russia's concessions at the end of the Crimean War. After a brief but intense war-scare Russia agreed to a conference in which Britain accepted the new status quo.

<sup>193</sup> See e.g. Mill (1870a); (1870b); (1870c). See also Varouxakis (2013: 48-76).

<sup>194</sup> For reactions to Mill's contributions see e.g. *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 23, p. 4); (1870, Nov. 26, p. 4); (1870, Nov. 28, p. 4).

<sup>195</sup> *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 16, p. 4). See also Dalrymple (1871: 963-4); *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 19, p. 4); W.G. Hamley (1871a: 244); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 16, p. 4); (Nov. 17, p. 4); (Nov. 18, p. 4); (Nov. 21, p. 4); (Nov. 24, p. 4); (Nov. 26, p. 4); (Nov. 28, p. 4); (Nov. 29, p. 4); (Nov. 30, p. 4).

course of action, even if as a means of last resort. Fundamentally, rational actors took a peaceful stance: most countries 'in their calm, unimpassioned periods, admit, the sin and inexpediency of wars'.<sup>196</sup> At the same time, discussing the possible travails of reasonable England, Hamley noted 'that it may not rest with us whether we quarrel or no'.<sup>197</sup> Firstly, other nations could threaten certain interests which Britain would not want to concede.<sup>198</sup> Swayne considered, for instance, the independence of Belgium as an interest of Britain which she could not compromise.<sup>199</sup> And during the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78, the route to India was posited by conservative commentators as similarly hallowed.<sup>200</sup> Secondly, Britain could go to war to prevent its honour being impugned to too great an extent.<sup>201</sup> During the Danish Duchies affair, Cecil argued that Russell's statements promising support to Denmark had involved Britain's honour sufficiently that Britain could not afford to stand idly by, but ought to assist Denmark in the war.<sup>202</sup>

Even territorial change coerced through warfare could still be a part of a foreign policy based in reason, if it were a means to secure interests or stability, rather than fuelled by a desire for territorial aggrandisement. Conservative commentators for instance lauded the British and French peace terms at the end of the Crimean war, which included territorial cessions on the part of Russia, as a model of moderate foreign policy — all the demands were made not with the aggrandisement of France or England in mind, but merely with securing the future peace and order of Europe.<sup>203</sup>

The unreasonableness of war as a means in international politics lay not in any inherent immorality, according to conservatives, but in the attendant costs, so unlikely to be worth the glory gained. Conservatives conceded that when the disparity in power between states was large enough, even taking an aggressive attitude and making a bid

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<sup>196</sup> Hamley (1871a: 240).

<sup>197</sup> Hamley (1871c: 501).

<sup>198</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1864a: 284-6); (1870: 544-5); Dasent (1870: 301-2); Hamley (1870a: 384-5); Patterson (1864a: 132).

<sup>199</sup> Swayne (1867: 195).

<sup>200</sup> The Indian empire both needed the line of communications, and could not afford the blow to its prestige which a defeat of Britain by Russia in Asia would bring. The route to India was already an issue during the Crimean War, see Elwin (1854: 295-6); E.B. (Hamley (1856a: 240-1); Patterson (1856a: 617); Oliphant (1856: 485). This anxiety blossomed during the late 1870s, in both periodicals and Parliament. See Bennett-Stanford (1877: 909); Bourke (1876b: 1109); (1878a: 599-600); Burrows (1877: 547); Chaplin (1877a: 647-8); (1878a: 1002); Cowell (1876e: 774-5); (1877f: 740); (1878a: 99, 104); Craik (1878a: 268-69); Cross (1877a: 468); (1878b: 753); Disraeli (1878c: 1769, 1773); Frere (1878: 482, 484-5); Hamley (1877a: 765); Keppel (1878: 536); MacDougall (1877: 487); Northcote (1877c: 948); (1878b: 867); (1878c: 1107); Patterson (1878: 485-6, 489); Sandon (1877a: 515); Sidebottom (1878: 721); Smith and Layard (1877: 301-2); Wharnccliffe (1878: 11); Wolff (1877a: 459); (1877b: 446-7).

<sup>201</sup> Gleig (1866: 652); Hamley (1871c: 501-2).

<sup>202</sup> Cecil (1864a: 284-6).

<sup>203</sup> *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 17, p. 4); (Nov. 19, p. 4); (Dec. 5, p. 4); Manners (1871: 948-9); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 15, p. 4); (Nov. 17, p. 4); (Nov. 19, p. 4); (Nov. 22, p. 4); (Nov. 26, p. 4); (Nov. 28, p. 4).

for military glory could seem reasonable. If another state all but 'offered itself, by its helpless protestation', reason would enact little restraint on the desire for military glory.<sup>204</sup> Conservatives alluded to this point especially in their frequent arguments for a well-funded and well-prepared British military.

#### Reason, ideals, and delusions in critiques of liberal British statesmen

Conservatives generally associated passion with the people and reason with statesmen. They made an exception, however, for the liberal and radical statesmen of Britain. These, conservatives thought, often abandoned reason in favour of their abstract ideals and sentiments, with the most pernicious results. Cecil was representative of conservative opinion when he argued that statesmanship ought to be about pragmatism and particular interests, rather than the liberals' preferred ideals, imagination, and a "cause".<sup>205</sup> Conservative commentators furthermore noted that some liberals and radicals were so invested in certain preconceptions or 'fictions', regarding for instance the venality of aristocratic diplomats or peace following from an increase in commerce, that they no longer even considered the possibility of their assumptions being mistaken.<sup>206</sup> Conservatives argued that liberals let their ideals and sentiments distract them from the political realities: their 'visions ... however noble as sentiments, are false when taken as the basis of practical conclusions'.<sup>207</sup> Any foreign policy informed by ideals or sentiment would no longer work in the interests of the country, being either diverted to a wholly different end or unable to discern the effective means of securing them.

Conservatives pressed this point especially forcefully in the debates surrounding Italian unification, where they decried the 'hysterical sighs over the past, and visionary aspirations for the future' which were animating the liberal boosters of Italy.<sup>208</sup> They accused liberals of three major misunderstandings regarding the character of the Italian Question and Britain's proper role in it.

Laurence Oliphant firstly argued that the abstract end of freedom was all but

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<sup>204</sup> Wilson (1871b: 361); see also Hamley (1870c: 790); (1871c: 501).

<sup>205</sup> Cecil (1862: 227-8). See also Cecil (1864a: 239); Patterson (1862a, especially 341-3); Wilson (1870: 389); (1871a: 87).

<sup>206</sup> Cecil (1870: 541). On diplomats, see Lever (1869: 357). See also Lever (1871d: 367); Wilson (1870: 388). Claeys (2010: 86) notes that the Positivist Harrison thought that the influence of the aristocracy was to blame for Britain's immoral foreign policy.

<sup>207</sup> Atkinson (1859: 354-5). See also Gleig (1866: 649); Lever (1870c: 509); (1871b: 583); Wilson (1870: 389); (1871b: 370).

<sup>208</sup> Atkinson (1859: 353). See also Cecil (1862: 216, 227-8); Derby, cited in Hicks (2007: 209); Patterson (1859a: 378); (1860: 10-11); Swayne (1856: 91).

meaningless. Some forms of freedom could be valueless, such as 'the freedom of the United States, in which a man is free to use his revolver'. With British freedom being such a particularly worthwhile instantiation of the concept, Oliphant observed, 'the notion of freedom in Italy kindles a fire of sympathetic enthusiasm amongst us, because we have a very faint notion of what Italian freedom is going to be like, and we have fallen in love with the abstraction'. Endorsing freedom as an abstract concept, to be implemented everywhere, was, Oliphant asserted, a misguided project based on a 'delusion'.<sup>209</sup>

Conservative commentators further argued that the means which liberals imagined would realise this end of freedom, the Italian sentiment of nationality, had in reality a negligible causal force. The liberal Matthew Arnold explicitly argued for the force of Italian nationality, based as it was in a shared history of glorious Rome.<sup>210</sup> Swayne gently suggested that the appeal of the Roman classical heritage to educated Britons had resulted among them in an imagined vista of Italy 'far brighter and more glorious than reality'.<sup>211</sup> Most conservatives were less tactful, with for instance Atkinson writing that the 'nationality of Italy, we have seen, is but the baseless phantom of political romance. ... we deem Italian nationality, unity, or indeed, political independence, to be among those wild chimeras and alluring phantoms', those 'words ... of delusion' and that 'visionary vapouring', characteristic of demagogues rather than statesmen.<sup>212</sup>

Thirdly, conservatives complained that liberals placed a vague set of ethical ideals – Italian independence and nationality – before the actual interests of Britain. Rather than working to realise an Italian nation-state, based on their sentimental ideals, liberal statesmen ought to work to realise the interests of Britain, as understood through a reasoned assessment of the implications of the Italian issue for Britain's international

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<sup>209</sup> Oliphant (1860a: 359). Laurence Oliphant (1829-1888) travelled extensively throughout Europe and Asia, and contributed his first-hand impressions of Savoy and Nice to *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1860, of Poland in 1863-64, and of Schleswig and Holstein in 1864. Oliphant had connections of patronage to Palmerston and Russell, and unsuccessfully stood as a Liberal in the 1857 election. He broke with his patrons over their handling of the Danish Duchies affair, was elected as a Liberal in 1865, and after his maiden speech was already 'in very hot water with his own party' due to his independent line on foreign affairs (Taylor 1982: 128, also 113). Later in life he would seek and gain the patronage of Disraeli and Salisbury. Oliphant was unlike other conservative commentators in that he viewed most affairs also from the local populations' points of view, rather than merely from Britain's interests. He had no sympathy for the principle of nationality, however, and consistently presented both causes of and solutions for international crises through the prism of conservative international thought. See e.g. Oliphant (1864a: 385-6, 388, 396); (1864b: 504); (1965: 122, 124).

<sup>210</sup> Arnold (1859: 11-17).

<sup>211</sup> Swayne (1856: 77). See also Atkinson (1859: 351).

<sup>212</sup> Atkinson (1859: 350-1, 353-4, 365). See also Cecil (1859: 27); Forsyth (1861: 166-7).

position.<sup>213</sup>

By the time of Gladstone's first administration of 1868-74, he had become, in the writings of conservative commentators, the personification of the liberals' tendency towards adopting ideals and delusions as the basis of their perspective on international affairs. Hamley stressed the liberals' divorce from reason and reality in direct reaction to Gladstone's article of October 1870, which spoke of the 'idea of Public Right' and 'the general judgment of civilised mankind'.<sup>214</sup> Conservatives had long indicted Cobden and the peace party, with its isolationist attitude, for basing their position on a misunderstanding of the international realm, 'wrapt up in dreams of millennial peace, and in theories which maintain that the nations have grown too wise to go to war any more'.<sup>215</sup> Hamley now similarly argued, with Gladstone in mind, that 'a statesman who professes to believe, and who would make us believe, that such a state [of general peace] has been attained, and that, relying on this fact, we need take no measure for our own protection, is wholly unfit to govern'.<sup>216</sup> The liberal statesman such as Gladstone, Hamley asserted, did not judge 'by the hard logic of facts', but would rather 'give himself up to his hallucination' with 'utter abandonment'.<sup>217</sup>

Conservatives argued that an effective foreign policy needed to be founded in reason and in a realistic apprehension of the facts of international politics. They then complained that the British liberals, being wrapped up in their world of ideals, lacked exactly this grounding in reality.

### Passions and the people: the substance of popular influence on foreign policy

The passions were, in the minds of conservatives, closely linked to the people, as opposed to statesmen. Conservatives characterised the masses as generally driven by passion and sentiment.<sup>218</sup> The people would prefer a policy which acted on their

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<sup>213</sup> Aytoun (1860: 252); Cecil (1859: 11); (1862: 207-9); Oliphant (1860a: 359-60); (1860b: 649-50); Lytton in Urban (1938: 276); Patterson (1860: 140-8); (1862a: 337); (1862b: 260); (1862c: 512-3, 517-8). Of course, liberals argued that the spread of their values would exactly be in Britain's interest. See Parry (2006: 6).

<sup>214</sup> Gladstone (1870: Incidentally, Gladstone, too, noted in this article (1870: 556) that 'powerful appeals to passion and emotion' when debating an international issue could 'greatly ... compromise the action of the judicial faculty'.

<sup>215</sup> Patterson (1860: 16-17, 28). See also Hardman (1859: 614); Oliphant (1860a: 360-63). Contrast this with Bagehot (1860: 226) on Gladstone.

<sup>216</sup> Hamley (1870c: 787). An ever-present complaint of conservative commentators was that liberal and radical statesmen were unwilling to fund the military properly.

<sup>217</sup> Hamley (1871a: 239).

<sup>218</sup> Cecil (1864a: 250, 267, 282); (1870: 553); (1871: 270); Dasent (1870: 302); Gleig (1870a: 651); Lever (1869: 357); (1871b: 583); (1870c: 509); (1871d: 367); Oliphant (1864a: 390); Patterson (1864a: 132); Wilson (1870: 380, 384); (1871a: 90).

immediate desires, little concerned with the (possibly violent) means needed to realise these preferences, with insight into the geopolitical situation, or with the longer-term interests of the country. Cecil was representative of conservative opinion when he remarked throughout one of his articles on 'the exquisite obtuseness which generally distinguishes violent outbursts of public feeling'.<sup>219</sup>

When caught up in some passion, 'the mob, the middle classes, ... [parliament] itself' would demand the absolute realisation of their imagined ends, and reject any compromise or settlement, being 'too impatient of any powers confronting its will – however legitimately existing – to come to any terms of compromise with them'.<sup>220</sup> In this way passion – and the people – influenced foreign policy predominantly as a major cause of conflict.<sup>221</sup> Military victory and its accompanying one-sided terms of peace would often, conservatives thought, be the only way to realise the absolute aims demanded by passion. It was consequently when passion dominated reason, conservatives warned, that war came to be seen as an attractive course of action and states adopted an aggressive attitude.<sup>222</sup>

This increased likelihood of war was all the more galling to conservatives, because the passions sparking conflict had little time for interests or stature, the proper concerns of foreign policy. Commenting on the Franco-Prussian war, Hamley asserted that all the 'blood and tears and ruin' were not worth settling such a 'contemptible quarrel' – any war from passion 'was wholly unnecessary, and therefore criminal'.<sup>223</sup> Conservatives discerned four interrelated passions which influenced foreign policy and agitated for aggression.

Firstly, while they approved of the ambition to make one's country great and respected in Europe, conservatives discerned the dangerous influence of passion if this ambition shifted into the zero-sum desire to be the single greatest country of Europe, in a martial vein; to be the preponderant state in Europe with the most patriotic strength, valour, and martial skill.<sup>224</sup> Ambition was in that case infused with aggression — pride and 'unbridled arrogance' were 'feelings which, without tangible ground of quarrel,

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<sup>219</sup> Cecil (1859: 4, 9-10, 12). See also Forsyth (1861: 134-5, 170); Hardman (1858: 464); Lever (1863b: 655, 665); (1863c: 61); Oliphant (1860c: 740); Patterson (1859a: 383-384, 388); (1862b: 255); Swayne (1859: 752, 755); (1861: 81).

<sup>220</sup> Gleig (1870a: 650) and Wilson (1870: 385); see also Cecil (1870: 555-6); Gleig (1866: 651).

<sup>221</sup> Cecil (1864a: 258, 281); (1870: 552); Dasent (1870: 296, 301-2); Gleig (1870a: 655); Oliphant (1864b: 507); Patterson (1864a: 130, 132); (1864b: 641); Wilson (1870: 384, 389).

<sup>222</sup> See e.g. Hamley (1871a: 240).

<sup>223</sup> Hamley (1871a: 253); (1871b: 388); (1871c: 504).

<sup>224</sup> Dasent (1870: 313); Gleig (1870a: 648); Wilson (1870: 373-4).

could impel two powerful and prosperous nations to deadly combat'.<sup>225</sup> The Franco-Prussian war, several conservatives observed, was motivated by such passion. The war did not revolve around interests, but around '[t]hat fatal question, "which of us is greater?"'.<sup>226</sup>

The second passion which conservatives thought led countries to war was a 'lust for territory' and 'love of foreign conquest'.<sup>227</sup> This was a passion not merely for martial superiority and military victory, but for the increase of territory and for the annexation of neighbouring polities.<sup>228</sup> This passion, Patterson argued, informed German policy during the Danish Duchies affair; 'they desire to wrench Holstein from Denmark ... [and have it] united to the territories of the Confederation'.<sup>229</sup> Similarly, both France and Prussia, conservatives noted, longed to possess the territory on the east and west bank of the Rhine, respectively. These simmering, conflicting desires shaped a context in which neither side would much mind a war, since it implied an opportunity to gain this territory.<sup>230</sup> The lust for territory could range from such a limited desire for the conquest of a particular territory, to an 'insatiable appetite of territorial aggrandisement' as 'the prime motive and ruling passion' of a state.<sup>231</sup>

A third spur to war which conservatives identified was the passion for revenge, the desire to redress past defeats.<sup>232</sup> This sentiment was related to both of the former passions, in that the history which had sparked a passion for revenge would also have made the countries feel strongly about their relative greatness and would likely have left both sides 'coveting ... each other's territory'.<sup>233</sup> Foreign policy informed by this passion would conceive of a hostile country as an eternal antagonist, whereas a statesman influenced by reason would 'remember that, though his adversary were now his enemy, the day might come when he might wish for him as his friend'.<sup>234</sup> The Napoleonic wars were an important source of this desire for revenge. Hamley for instance posited that the Franco-Prussian war was 'the product of the wars waged in the beginning of the century'.<sup>235</sup> Moreover, the cycle of vengeful wars would likely continue. With French

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<sup>225</sup> Hamley (1871b: 375, 388); see also Cecil (1864a: 240-1).

<sup>226</sup> Hamley (1871a: 253); see also Gleig (1870a: 650-1); Hamley (1870a: 384-5); (1871c: 504); Lever (1870c: 510); Wilson (1871b: 367).

<sup>227</sup> Both Cecil (1864a: 260) and Hamley (1870c: 783); Wilson (1870: 391).

<sup>228</sup> Cecil (1870: 546); Dasent (1870: 319); Gleig (1870b: 662).

<sup>229</sup> Patterson (1864a: 130, 132).

<sup>230</sup> Cecil (1864a: 283); (1870: 545, 551-2); Dasent (1870: 299, 312); Wilson (1870: 391-2).

<sup>231</sup> Wilson (1871b: 366).

<sup>232</sup> Dasent (1870: 320); Gleig (1866: 647); Lever (1871b: 581); Swayne (1867: 194).

<sup>233</sup> Hamley (1871a: 253).

<sup>234</sup> Dasent (1870: 323); see also Wilson (1870: 388).

<sup>235</sup> Hamley (1871a: 254-5). See also Cecil (1864a: 283); Hamley (1870a: 384-5); Wilson (1870: 383).

commentators already declaring that the siege of Paris 'inaugurates a terrible era of bloody revenge', Hamley concluded that 'this war ... is likely also to be the parent of wars for many a year'.<sup>236</sup>

Fourthly and finally, several conservative commentators discerned the dangerous influence of the concept of nationality. Conservatives, if they considered the notion at all, mainly spoke of nationality as a sentiment.<sup>237</sup> This sentiment of nationality was often entwined with the other passions, providing a fertile ground for them to grow. People caught up in the sentiment of nationality, conservatives noted, were also likely to want their state to be the most powerful of Europe, as imagined evidence that their nation was the greatest of all.<sup>238</sup> The sentiment of nationality often entailed a lust for territory, since it implied the desire to arraign all the people of the nationality under a single polity.<sup>239</sup> In a similar vein, the sentiment of nationality could provide a great impetus to the passion for revenge, especially if a past defeat had resulted in the loss of any "national" territory.<sup>240</sup> Any conquests suggested by the sentiment of nationality would moreover be presented as righteous rectification rather than naked aggression.

The problematic influence of the passions on the course of international politics was compounded, conservatives observed, by the trend of increasing popular influence on the foreign policy of states. As the general populace had gained and governments and courts had, relatively speaking, lost influence over foreign policy, the chance of major wars occurring, conservatives thought, had increased. The prominence of the people meant the prominence of passions, not least the sentiment of nationality, in setting the course of a state's foreign policy.<sup>241</sup>

### **The roles of statesmen and the people in setting foreign policy**

Conservatives thought that the foreign policy of a state was the result, in its domestic influences, of the interplay of reason and passion. The preponderance of the passions

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<sup>236</sup> Hamley (1871a: 254-5); see also Cecil (1870: 554-5); Dasent (1870: 318-9); Gleig (1870b: 663); Hamley (1871a: 243); (1871c: 489); Lever (1870c: 511-2); (1871b: 583); Wilson (1870: 383); (1871a: 367-8, 370); (1871b: 370). Similarly, conservatives indicted the North for its barbaric mode of warfare during the Civil War, thereby instilling ill will among the southerners for decades to come. See Cecil (1862: 537); (1865: 274); Patterson (1862a: 641); Ross (1865a: 33-4); Wolseley (1863: 24).

<sup>237</sup> Cecil (1864a: 267); (1870: 551-2, 556); Dasent (1870: 295); Oliphant (1864a: 389-90); (1864b: 504); Patterson (1864a: 122); Wilson (1871a: 87).

<sup>238</sup> Cecil (1864a: 240-1); Patterson (1864c: 253).

<sup>239</sup> Cecil (1864a: 260); (1870: 555-6); Patterson (1864a: 129, 131); Dasent (1870: 296); Wilson (1870: 391-2).

<sup>240</sup> Cecil (1870: 544, 551-2); Dasent (1870: 309-11); Gleig (1871: 127-8). See also Cecil (1864a: 262), on how the agitation and absolutism of national sentiment could turn two countries with minor conflicts of interests into 'two embittered and irreconcilable' foes.

<sup>241</sup> Cecil (1864a: 238-9); (1870: 555-6); Lever (1871c: 445-6); Patterson (1864a: 111); (1864c: 253).



over reasoned judgement among the people led to the quality of a foreign policy decreasing as the influence of the masses increased – a foreign policy which was more violent, more about the uncompromising pursuit of imagined, absolute ideals or of military glory and territorial gain. Conservatives contrasted the above with the statesman's policy of a reasoned pursuit of the country's interests, with ample possibility for compromise. The people needed, in their own interest, to defer to statesmen, who were to use their superior judgement to identify the country's long-term interests and decide on its actions. Liberals, in contrast, did not necessarily consider popular influence on statesmen a problem, both because passions could be substantively good and because people could be more reasonable — more peace- and liberty-loving — than statesmen desiring glory and aggrandisement.<sup>242</sup>

Conservative commentators had decided ideas on what made for a good statesman. They emphasised the statesman's task to safeguard the foreign policy of the state from the influence of popular passion through the exercise of leadership and reasoned judgement. Wise men, E.B. Hamley asserted, 'view with contempt, regret, or compassion the ordinary expression of popular opinion'.<sup>243</sup> The actual foreign policy of a state was then strongly influenced by how well a statesman could deal with the masses and their passions. Conservatives here discerned three different possibilities.

Firstly, the people could be properly disciplined and deferential to their rulers. In this case, they would accept the judgement of statesmen on the policy course to be followed, and the people's desires and sentiments would exercise little influence on the foreign policy enacted by a state. Secondly, the masses could be led by passion, but the skilful demagogue could then manage to control and canalise the expression of these passions for his own ends. Foreign policy would now likely revolve around the preoccupations of the demagogue, rather than the interests of the country. Thirdly, statesmen could feel obliged to pander to the desires and sentiments of the masses, in order to secure their tenure. In this situation statesmen still decided on the details of the foreign policy, but its general aim now became the gratification of the passions of the people, rather than the realisation of the interests of the ruler or country.

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<sup>242</sup> See e.g. Arnold (1859: 17-30); Harrison in Claeys (2010: 86); Mill in Varouxakis (2013: 181).

<sup>243</sup> E.B. Hamley (1856a: 232-3). E.B. Hamley (1824-1893) was an army officer and military theorist. He served in the Crimean War as aide-de-camp to the commander of British artillery. From 1859 to 1865 he was Professor of Military History at the Staff College at Sandhurst. His 1866 *Operations of War* 'was a remarkable success and established Hamley's reputation as Britain's leading authority on military thought' (Lloyd 2004). From 1870 to 1877 he was commandant of the Staff College, and from 1885 to 1892 a

### Their proper roles: leadership and deference

Conservatives perceived, in various fields, a natural hierarchy between leaders and followers, a 'principle of submission to an established authority'.<sup>244</sup> Conservatives saw leaders and followers as not merely two different expressions of the same encompassing entity, such as a "national community", but as qualitatively different, with different motivations, different ends, and different roles to play. While leaders had agency, followers had an essentially passive role to play – they were to be guided by the leaders, and good results were only possible if the others' lead was accepted. Assuming such deference, conservatives thought outcomes were then, especially over the longer term, mostly a function of the quality of leadership.<sup>245</sup> Conservatives perceived this need for hierarchy, leadership, and deference most strongly, regarding international affairs, in the policy-setting process of a state.

Conservatives argued that, in setting foreign policy, both the general populace and Parliament were to recognise the authority and to defer to the leadership and judgement of statesmen.<sup>246</sup> Statesmen, in their turn, had a positive responsibility to exercise leadership and to make judgements on behalf of their country. 'To one who undertakes to guide public opinion', Gleig asserted, 'character is everything. ... his power of forming judgements for himself, and constraining others to be guided by them; that is the criterion by which statesmen are mainly tried'.<sup>247</sup> Statesmen were to make their judgements based on reason and a realistic assessment of the state of affairs. In particular, conservatives noted, statesmen were not to act based on flights of fancy and they were not to be carried away by passion, as the general population often was.<sup>248</sup> It could consequently be the statesman's duty to act against the immediate wishes of the people and parliament, 'the floating opinion of the hour', in order to secure 'consistency of policy' in the long-term interests of the country, 'carefully thought out ... and

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Conservative MP.

<sup>244</sup> Cecil (1871: 258); see also Cecil (1871: 264); Gleig (1870a: 642); Lever (1871b: 582-3).

<sup>245</sup> This view of conservatives contrasted with the view that national character determined outcomes, and was what should be discerned and somehow influenced.

<sup>246</sup> Cecil (1871: 258, 267); Gleig (1870b: 660); Hamley (1878a: 111); Lever (1869: 361-2); (1871b: 582); Patterson (1864b: 639); Wilson (1871a: 77); (1871b: 354-5). Conservatives generally conflated Parliament and the people in these analyses since, they argued, Parliament, being popularly elected, was in the thrall of the masses and would follow their capricious whims. See e.g. Cecil (1871: 275). Conservatives discerned this proper relationship for instance between Cavour and the general population of Piedmont. See Cecil (1859: 4); Forsyth (1861: 170); Hardman (1858: 464); (1859: 621); Lever (1863a: 576-7); (1863b: 655); Patterson (1862c: 503); Oliphant (1860b: 645-6).

<sup>247</sup> Gleig (1866: 643).

<sup>248</sup> Cecil (1864a: 267); Gleig (1870a: 654); Hamley (1871a: 256); (1871b: 384-5); (1871c: 494); Lever (1870a: 244); Oliphant (1864b: 507); Wilson (1871b: 357).

unflaggingly maintained'.<sup>249</sup>

Conservative thought here differed markedly from the thought of many liberals, even though Gladstone, for instance, also emphasised leadership by statesmen and discipline on the part of the people. Gladstone however related discipline to a rejection of self or class interest, which the people would achieve if given the responsibility to make their own judgements, through political participation in an extended franchise.<sup>250</sup> Conservatives attached an almost opposite meaning to discipline. People, in their view, were to demur from making their own judgements, and were rather to defer to the judgements made by their leaders. The deference of the people towards the government was for conservatives an essential element of any vigorous state.<sup>251</sup> Oliphant for instance praised the lack of 'revolutionary character' among the people of Holstein, and noted 'the extraordinary respect for constituted authority which the Holsteiners have shown'.<sup>252</sup> The political system of a state mattered mostly in whether it fostered or inhibited such deference.

The judgement of statesmen should be deferred to, argued conservatives, because statesmen were capable of 'better judgement' than the mass of people or even Parliament.<sup>253</sup> Their judgement was better firstly because statesmen, in the minds of conservatives, were persons of a higher quality than the general populace; they were wiser, 'more forbearing', and they drew upon their 'sense of the logic of the situation', rather than upon 'angry passion' or 'parliamentary rhetoric'.<sup>254</sup> Secondly, a statesman's better judgement rested on his 'superior knowledge' concerning the affairs he was to judge.<sup>255</sup> 'Of all the things John Bull pays for', Lever lamented, 'there is not one of which he knows less, or takes a fainter interest in, than Diplomacy', while Oliphant complained that 'a foreign policy which should be sufficiently profound to achieve the object desired can scarcely ever be adopted, because it would not be understood by the nation'.<sup>256</sup> An effective policy would be based on a foresight and preparation which could only result from a reasoned, realistic consideration of all the details of the diplomatic and military situation. And given this demand for insider knowledge and

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<sup>249</sup> Cecil (1871: 268, 275, 268); see also (1871: 269); Patterson (1864a: 130).

<sup>250</sup> See Parry (2006: 251-3).

<sup>251</sup> Cecil (1871: 258); see also Cecil (1871: 264); Gleig (1870a: 642); Lever (1871b: 582-3).

<sup>252</sup> Oliphant (1864a: 387).

<sup>253</sup> Oliphant (1864a: 383).

<sup>254</sup> Patterson (1864a: 111), Wilson (1871a: 84), Cecil (1864a: 267), Wilson (1871a: 84). See also Gleig (1870a: 651, 654); Patterson (1864a: 110). Lever (1870c: 511) and Cecil (1870: 541) extended this line of reasoning to an assessment of the different classes within the general populace<sup>254254</sup>.

<sup>255</sup> Oliphant (1864a: 383); see also Cecil (1864a: 267).

<sup>256</sup> Lever (1869: 359) and Oliphant (1864a: 383).

secret planning, '[the Ministry] alone', Elwin noted, 'are in a position to estimate thoroughly the situation of affairs' and formulate the optimal foreign policy.<sup>257</sup> Cecil similarly observed that the manoeuvring of international politics 'is a matter of delicacy, on which the outside world can arrive at no safe opinion'.<sup>258</sup>

Conservatives did envision certain rights and a role for Parliament and the people in setting foreign policy. Firstly, they had the right to be led by their statesmen from reason.<sup>259</sup> Conservatives consequently condemned radicals and Gladstonian liberals, for letting themselves be led by their sentiments and ideals, thus betraying this trust. Secondly, the people and Parliament had the right to 'be satisfactorily informed of the position of affairs' and of 'the general character of the [government's] policy', with the important constraint, however, that if statesmen indicated a need for secrecy, then both parliamentarians and the public were to defer to this judgement.<sup>260</sup> This second right existed so there could be an informed, reasoned public debate on foreign affairs, in Parliament and among the educated classes.<sup>261</sup> Here then lay the role which conservatives envisaged for Parliament and the public; they could be a source of 'calm earnest council' for statesmen 'as to what course should have been followed'.<sup>262</sup> Public debate thus functioned to aid statesmen in their decisions. The final judgement on the proper course of action was still the statesman's to make.<sup>263</sup> Unsurprisingly, conservatives argued this point particularly strenuously during the Eastern Question crisis of the late 1870s, as the foreign policy of Disraeli's Conservative government came under fierce liberal and radical criticism.<sup>264</sup>

#### Aberration I: statesmen pandering to the people

The ominous alternative to proper leadership and deference was that the people would no longer defer to the judgement of the statesmen. Rather, the public would expect statesmen to follow its preferences and passions. Every statesman but the occasional exceptional one would now fear for the security of his position. The statesman would consequently '[make] himself the instrument of the known passions of his subjects' in

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<sup>257</sup> Elwin (1854: 296). See also e.g. Beresford Hope (1855: 27); Cecil (1855: 1601); Lytton (1855: 1390).

<sup>258</sup> Cecil (1870: 541).

<sup>259</sup> See e.g. Lever (1870a: 244).

<sup>260</sup> Patterson (1864b: 639). On the necessity for secrecy, see Patterson (1864c: 244-5) and Cecil (1870: 541).

<sup>261</sup> Cecil (1871: 269); Lever (1870a: 244).

<sup>262</sup> Hamley (1871c: 494-5). Note the past tense.

<sup>263</sup> Cecil (1871: 268-9); Wilson (1871a: 85).

<sup>264</sup> Barttelot (1878: 899-900); Bourke (1876a: 738-9); Cross (1877a: 456); Disraeli (1876a: 1141-2); Liddell (1877a: 552); Northcote (1877a: 102); (1877b: 467-8, 470); Sandon (1877a: 514); Wolff (1876a: 1123-4);

order to secure their fleeting support.<sup>265</sup> A popularly elected parliament merely added another dimension to this insecurity.<sup>266</sup> As a consequence of this pandering to both parliament and the people, foreign policy would be based on emotion and ignorance, rather than on reason and reliable knowledge. When statesmen felt the need to pander to the people, 'every great measure of national policy will be valued in their scales, not by its probable influence on the future honour or welfare of the nation, but by its immediate purchasing power in the market of votes'.<sup>267</sup> Policy decided upon on this basis would inevitably lead to disaster, to 'the reckoning that awaits all, nations or men, who prefer to indulge in the pleasing illusions of the present rather than bear the pain and discipline of foresight'.<sup>268</sup>

While democracy was an obvious source of such popular pressure, conservatives did not think that this problem was fundamentally linked to a particular political structure. During the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78, for instance, conservative commentators noted the deleterious influence of the public in 'Turkey, Britain, Austria, and even autocratic Russia: 'tottering between a ruinous war and a more ruinous revolution, the Czar may prefer present danger to future destruction'.<sup>269</sup> Statesmen themselves, conservatives thought, were generally moderate, reasonable people. It was mainly the spectre of domestic disorder and the influence of popular passions which would force states into war with each other.

#### Aberration II: demagogues inflaming the passions of the people

Another problem noted by conservatives, besides that of a wilful public, was that of *statesmen* who did not follow *their* prescribed role. To some extent this was already the case when statesmen pandered, but this was the result of a prior misstep by the general populace; conservatives both thought it unrealistic to expect the average statesman to imperil their position, and argued that a non-deferential public would lead to statesmen

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(1877b: 440-1, 449).

<sup>265</sup> Wilson (1870: 373); see also Cecil (1864a: 250, 258); (1871: 259-63, 267-8); Cowell (1876b: 250); Dasent (1870: 299, 324, 327); Hamley (1870b: 527-8); (1871b: 384-5); (1871c: 493-5); Patterson (1864a: 128); Swayne (1867: 193-5).

<sup>266</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1864a: 264, 281).

<sup>267</sup> Cecil (1871: 260, see also 262).

<sup>268</sup> Cecil (1871: 281), who seemed to be inspired by Burke in his choice of language, though he does not refer to Burke explicitly.

<sup>269</sup> Smith and Layard (1877: 296). See for further iterations of this view, both formulated in general terms and applied to Russia, Turkey, Britain, and Austria during the Eastern Question of 1876-78: Cecil (1878a: 57); Cowell (1876a: 93); (1876b: 247, 249-250); (1877e: 644); (1878c: 387); (1878i: 370); (1878k: 761); Frere (1876: 490-1, 498); Hamley (1877a: 752); (1877f: 635, 644); (1878a: 110); Kinglake and Austin (1880: 526-7, 535); Shand (1878: 743, 754); Smith and Cowell (1877: 581).

of inferior quality becoming established in the first place.<sup>270</sup> Rather than the general populace merely losing its sense of deference, though, statesmen themselves could also willingly diverge from their proper role.

Demagogues, in the conservative understanding, were politicians who 'cultivated and ... disseminated' a certain convenient sentiment among the people, fanned the flames of a particular passion to which they then pandered.<sup>271</sup> While demagoguery could initially seem like a boon to even the wise statesman, it was a foolish course of action, argued conservatives; the passions awakened and encouraged would be sure to force the statesman's hand in the future, when the sentiment would no longer be lined up nicely with the preferred policy. Several conservative commentators speculated that such a fate might befall Bismarck. Bismarck had had to co-opt the German liberal and national movement and had done so very effectively, but his policy could become constrained by these inflamed passions in the future: 'His rare skill has enabled him to summon a mighty spirit to his aid; but he shares the common fate of such magicians,' Cecil noted rather prematurely in 1870, 'and finds that his spells are too weak to restrain the power he has raised'.<sup>272</sup> The archetype of the demagogue abroad, however, was Napoleon III, and his manipulation of the French public.

Conservatives discerned a tendency among French politicians, both republican and imperial, to react to adversity by 'rousing political passions'.<sup>273</sup> Indeed, France's history of revolutions and upheaval had led it to a point where, conservatives believed, the populace lacked deference to such an extent that only demagogues could establish themselves as statesmen.<sup>274</sup> Given this context, they respected the ability of Napoleon III, as a skilful demagogue who successfully appealed to the people's existing passions, while ameliorating their more mistaken desires, such as the desire for excessive concessions from Russia during the Crimean War.<sup>275</sup> Over the course of the 1860s, however, Napoleon III failed to sustain his high-wire act. Conservatives painted Napoleon III as a victim of his insecurity of tenure and his resulting need to pander to the people and to judge his officials based on their loyalty rather than quality.<sup>276</sup> In going

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<sup>270</sup> Cecil (1871: 278).

<sup>271</sup> Lever (1871b: 581).

<sup>272</sup> Cecil (1870: 553). See also Gleig (1870a: 645).

<sup>273</sup> Hamley (1870b: 527). See also Hamley (1870b: 528); (1870c: 783); (1871b: 381, 384-5); (1871c: 494-5).

<sup>274</sup> Patterson (1859: 365); (1862b: 246, 248).

<sup>275</sup> Cecil (1859: 7-9, 12-13); Hardman (1859: 618-9); Lever (1863b: 660); Oliphant (1860a: 364, 368); Patterson (1859a: 382-4, 388-9); (1860: 75-8); (1862b: 246-8, 255, 259-60); (1862b: 246-7, 259); Stanley (1860); Swayne (1859: 747-9, 750-2, 755, 757); (1861: 82, 84).

<sup>276</sup> Cecil (1864a: 283); (1871: 260-1); Gleig (1870a: 641-3); Lever (1871b: 582); Patterson (1864a: 128); Swayne (1867: 193).

to war, conservatives argued, Napoleon III was 'indulging a notoriously universal and inveterate mania of his subjects', rather than acting 'to satisfy his own ambition'.<sup>277</sup> The Franco-Prussian war, in particular, was 'a war undertaken at the bidding of the people'.<sup>278</sup>

In contrast to liberal commentators, conservatives thought that the type of regime, even whether republic or empire, did not matter much for the character and quality of a state's foreign policy.<sup>279</sup> Much more important was the character of the relationship between the statesmen and the people. France had fallen because even Napoleon III could not over the long term sustain a sensible foreign policy while yoked to a public which did not defer to his judgement, but rather demanded the gratification of its passions.

A second manifestation of demagoguery concerned the possibility that statesmen did act as leaders "imposing" their judgement on the masses, but that they made judgements based on delusions rather than a reasoned, realistic assessment of the world. Conservatives invoked this spectre of delusional statesmen primarily when criticising British liberal statesmen. Gladstone and politicians like him, conservatives complained, based their decisions not on 'experience' but on 'appeals ... [to] ridiculous' ideas.<sup>280</sup> Usually 'visionaries' such as the 'preachers of the party of peace' were fairly harmless, remarked Hamley in 1870, but they became a problem when such a person 'has been, by unhappy accident, exalted to a position from whence his words come with authority'.<sup>281</sup> Hamley was not so much concerned with the doctrine of the peace party being espoused in general public debate; rather, the problem appeared when a *statesman* asserted these delusions: '[t]he main evil is, that our countrymen are invited by a high authority to accept this phantasm and believe it true'.<sup>282</sup> Demagoguery on the part of British liberals reached its apogee, conservatives thought, in the 'most pernicious' extra-Parliamentary agitation movement during the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78. Conservatives widely condemned Gladstone for 'exciting popular passion' through his

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<sup>277</sup> Wilson (1870: 272) and Dasent (1870: 324); see also Cecil (1871: 262).

<sup>278</sup> Dasent (1870: 327); see also Cecil (1871: 263); Dasent (1870: 299). Here conservatives and liberals held opposite interpretations of events. Gladstone (1870: 580) for instance explicitly blamed Napoleon III and exonerated the French people, arguing that 'of the five wars, in which the Emperor Napoleon III has engaged, none have been demanded by the public opinion of the country'.<sup>278278</sup> See further Parry (2006: 247-8, 277-8, 282); Gladstone (1870: 564-5, 578-9).

<sup>279</sup> Wilson (1871b: 357).

<sup>280</sup> Lever (1871e: 445-6); see also Cecil (1871: 285); Patterson (1864c: 243, 252).

<sup>281</sup> Hamley (1871a: 239).

<sup>282</sup> Hamley (1870c: 787).

'appeals to prejudice and passion ... [in] inflammatory speeches and pamphlets'.<sup>283</sup> When discussing and setting foreign policy, they argued, statesmen had the responsibility of ensuring that the world-view and policies which they induced the people to accept were based in a pragmatic apprehension of the facts of international politics.

### The failure of British statesmanship

Conservatives perceived a lack of military preparedness as an endemic weakness of Britain's foreign policy in general, and of liberal statesmanship in particular. This trope was part of conservatives' arguments during the debate on British performance in the Crimean War, and would keep manifesting itself throughout these decades.

Conservative commentators emphasised that only when the statesmen were firmly in control would a foreign and a military policy be a sensible one.<sup>284</sup> The Crimean War had been such a shambles from beginning to end, they implied, because the politicians in power had failed to act like proper statesmen. Initially Whig and Peelite statesmen were too reticent, only taking action when forced by popular passion.<sup>285</sup> Palmerston, in contrast, was too pandering, promising the public spectacular victories where the war would, if fought according to best military practice, be a dull affair. Where Palmerston ought to teach the public patience, he merely fanned their desire for instantaneous glory.<sup>286</sup>

Most importantly, Whig and Peelite statesmen had for years wilfully foisted a delusion on the masses. The short-sighted public demanded strict economy in peace-time spending on the military. Whigs and Peelites pandered to the commercial class by claiming that there was no need for military preparedness and its accompanying costs; the prosperity and technological advancement of Britain sufficed to make it a powerful,

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<sup>283</sup> Cowell (1876d: 632); Smith and Cowell (1877: 586); Cowell (1877e: 643-44). See also Beresford Hope (1878: 785); Cowell (1877c: 364); Craik and Smith (1877: 287); Grantham (1877: 799-801); Hamley (1878a: 110); Liddell (1877a: 554-5); Peel (1877a: 678-9); Ritchie (1877: 664); Smith (1876: 576-7); Smith and Cowell (1877: 586); Smith and Layard (1877: 316-17); Wharnccliffe (1878: 9); Wolff (1878a: 995).

<sup>284</sup> Aytoun (1855: 4); Beresford Hope (1855: 27); Elwin (1854: 277, 288); E.B. Hamley (1855c: 350); (1855f: 531); (1855i: 260); (1856a: 234-5, 239); Patterson (1855a: 99).

<sup>285</sup> Alison (1855: 125); Aytoun (1855: 2-3); Beresford Hope (1855: 27); Elwin (1854: 280-1, 287-8, 298-9); Gleig (1855: 378-9); C. Hamley (1855a: 658-9); E.B. Hamley (1855c: 350); (1855d: 492, 495); (1855f: 531); (1855i: 261-2); (1855k: 627); (1856a: 233); (1856b: 7); Patterson (1855a: 110); (1855b: 231-2, 248); (1856a: 618-9).

<sup>286</sup> Aytoun (1854: 608); (1855: 4); Elwin (1854: 298-9); C. Hamley (1855a: 648-50, 656, 658-9); (1855b: 140, 142); (1855c: 435); E.B. Hamley (1855j: 520); (1855k: 627); (1856a: 234-5); Hamley and Burgoyne (1856: 489-90); Oliphant (1856: 482); Swayne (1854b: 718). C. Hamley, a military officer who was a part of the Baltic expeditions, was particularly vocal about the misguided expectations which Palmerston had encouraged among the public concerning the campaign.



secure country. These delusions of the commercial class had been rudely disproven, conservative commentators argued, by the troubling events of the Crimean War, where a backwards Russia had not rarely outperformed the British military.<sup>287</sup>

The bad preparation of Britain's military had caused concern during the first two years of the conflict, but near the end of the war conservatives were happy to conclude that Britain now had a fine army and navy, ready if called upon to engage in a major war.<sup>288</sup> Their worry was now whether the government and people of Britain would actually commit themselves to sustain this preparedness, even if it cost money and there seemed to be no immediate threat of war.<sup>289</sup> Conservatives conceptualised this choice as a coming struggle between a reawakened proper patriotism associated with gentlemen and the landed classes on the one hand, and on the other hand the false patriotism and penny-pinching spirit of economy associated with the Cobdenites and Peelites, the urban commercial classes, and the short-sighted policy focus of what they considered an overly democratic political system.<sup>290</sup>

A better quality foreign policy would follow from a higher quality statesman. In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war conservatives argued that Prussia's impressive performance had proven that a strong and independent executive achieved excellent results.<sup>291</sup> Conservatives noted significant structural deficiencies in Britain's political system, but, true to form, advocated that only minor measures be taken. The main lesson which conservatives drew from the success of Prussia's strong executive was that Britain should not end up with the other extreme, a military wholly enmeshed in Parliament and subject to the vicissitudes of popular and party politics.<sup>292</sup> Cecil called upon the leaders of both political parties to exercise leadership in order to mitigate the effects of these developments, by exempting some crucial areas of policy, including the funding of the military, from the direct, constant interference by Parliament.<sup>293</sup> Only with such relative immunity from the short-sighted shifts of popular politics would 'the fixed principles of action and the decisive policy ... indispensable to success' again

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<sup>287</sup> Alison (1855: 131); C. Hamley (1855b: 143, 145); (1855c: 427, 436); E.B. Hamley (1855g: 741).

<sup>288</sup> E.B. Hamley (1856a: 241-2); Hamley and Burgoyne (1856: 490); Patterson (1856a: 623); (1856b: 726, 735).

<sup>289</sup> Aytoun (1855: 4); Gleig (1855: 393); E.B. Hamley (1855c: 351-2); (1855f: 535); (1855j: 520); (1856a: 241-2); (1856b: 1-4); Patterson (1856b: 726-7); Hardman (1858: 100); Swayne (1855c: 346-7); (1856: 389).

<sup>290</sup> Alison (1855: 123-4, 131); Cecil (1855: 1603-4); E.B. Hamley (1855c: 351-3); (1855i: 262); (1856a: 233); (1856b: 14); Patterson (1855d: 749, 756); (1856b: 726-7); Swayne (1855a: 98-103); (1855c: 346-7); (1856: 389-90, 394-5).

<sup>291</sup> Cecil (1871: 267-8); Gleig (1870b: 658-62); Wilson (1871a: 74, 77-8). This was also a worry of British liberals. See Parry (2006: 286).

<sup>292</sup> Cecil (1871: 269, 272-4, 282-3); Gleig (1871: 120-1).

<sup>293</sup> Cecil (1871: 280).

become attainable in the government of Britain.<sup>294</sup>

At this time, Hamley also disparaged Gladstone's policy of "cheap government", associated especially with cuts to the army. Cheap government, Hamley argued, was promised by 'a clique of specious talkers, but incapable statesmen'.<sup>295</sup> Britain could have economy, certainly, but not cheap government; a military properly prepared for war could not come cheap. And why, wondered Hamley, make a problem out of this? It was after all just 'money – of which we have plenty'.<sup>296</sup> Britain's empire and stature in the world were easily worth some of its ample wealth.

A proper political system, in the minds of conservatives, was one which insulated statesmen from the influence of popular passions and Parliamentary meddling. Political institutions and public debate ought to foster the authority of statesmen and aid them in basing their foreign policy on their own reasoned judgement, in the best interest of the country as a whole.

### **The roles of morality and self-interest**

Conservatives envisaged no prominent role for ethics in shaping foreign policy. They discussed morality primarily in the context of arguments against the positions taken by Gladstonian liberals, who in contrast did envisage a central role for ethics in shaping foreign policy. Liberals shared 'the general belief that it [Britain] had a clear mission to guide the world to higher civilisation'.<sup>297</sup> In its most general sense, this meant to liberals the spread of constitutional liberty on the British model and a qualified support for the independence and self-determination of oppressed nationalities.<sup>298</sup> Conservatives thought that such ethics ought to feature neither in setting foreign policy nor in making sense of international affairs. One particular moral precept did play a role, however. Conservatives felt strongly that statesmen had the duty, the moral obligation to their fellow countrymen, to act in the best interest of their country. In fact, conservatives involved this moral precept in their arguments against liberal calls for an ethically informed foreign policy.

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<sup>294</sup> Cecil (1871: 281). Bagehot (1871b), in a review of Cecil's article, agreed with the diagnosis, but rejected the cure; rather than making the executive more independent, he argued, the people ought to be educated and 'instructed', which would lead to a 'clear and constant' military policy.

<sup>295</sup> Hamley (1870c: 779).

<sup>296</sup> Hamley (1870c: 779).

<sup>297</sup> Parry (2006: 250; also 255).

### The duty of statesmen: morality and self-interest in setting foreign policy

The question of what aims and ends a state ought to have in mind when faced with an issue in international politics, conservatives applied not to countries as a whole or even to states, but rather to statesmen. These statesmen, after all, had agency. They were to make the judgements and decisions which would form the country's foreign policy. Ethical standards for a country's foreign policy were in fact, for conservatives, ethical standards for the country's statesmen.

This was a crucial distinction since, as a consequence, conservatives could locate moral significance in the relationship between statesmen and the country, and argue that morality demanded a foreign policy based on the interests of the country. Liberals, in contrast, focused on the relationship between the country and the European community or humanity at large. Liberals and radicals had a 'strongly anthropomorphic view of the state as a moral agent'.<sup>299</sup> Concern over the nation's 'moral well-being' was to inform policy-making and the community of nations was bound by the same morality which bound individuals in the domestic sphere.<sup>300</sup> Gladstone in particular assumed the existence of a universal morality.<sup>301</sup> Britain had to do right by its peers and if possible elevate the moral tone of the neighbourhood. Good statesmen would act in line with this universally valid normative vision, that is to say would act to spread constitutional liberty.<sup>302</sup>

Conservatives, for whom the country was not a single national community and thus not as easily individualised, wholeheartedly rejected the normative sense of the domestic analogy. 'What we do object to', Hamley asserted in 1863, 'is the silly doctrine ... the off-spring of maudlin or hypocritical virtue, that the relations of nations should be governed by the same sentiment and morality as the relations of individuals. Such is not the case, never was, and never will be'.<sup>303</sup> Craik and Smith argued more extensively, in 1877, that 'there is a very imperfect analogy between national and individual morality'.<sup>304</sup> Indeed, whereas morality commended self-sacrifice in individuals, it positively condemned self-sacrifice in a state's foreign policy. Self-sacrifice was allowed,

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<sup>298</sup> Parry (2006: 250-251); Sylvest (2009: 38-43).

<sup>299</sup> Shannon (1963: 23). Liberals affirmed the domestic analogy, whereas conservatives rejected or at least qualified it. On the notion of the domestic analogy, see e.g. <sup>299</sup><sup>299</sup> Bull (1966); Suganami (1986; 1989).

<sup>300</sup> Parry (2006: 325-7); see also Shannon (1963: 212); Sylvest (2009: 9, 49).

<sup>301</sup> Gladstone (1870: 592-3); see also Parry (2006: 250-251).

<sup>302</sup> Gladstone (1870: 593); see also Parry (2006: 14, 253); Schreuder (1978: 128).

<sup>303</sup> Hamley (1863b: 638, 646-7) and (1864a: 458). See also Beresford Hope (1862: 43, 115-6); Cecil (1862: 535, 570); Hamley (1862a: 120); (1863b: 636-7); Spence (1861: 304-5); (1862: 10-11); Wolseley (1863: 25).

<sup>304</sup> Craik and Smith (1877: 285). See also Burrows (1877: 536); Cecil in Sylvest (2009: 48); Cowell (1877e: 643-4); Craik and Smith (1877: 285); Frere (1876: 512); Hamley (1877a: 768); Smith and Layard (1877:

'so long as we are yielding what is ours, and ours only, to yield'.<sup>305</sup> An individual could sacrifice his or her own interests, but a state could not do so. Foreign policy was determined by statesmen, 'however popular may be the constitution of a particular State', and were they to sacrifice the interests of their fellow citizens, 'they would, it is not too much to say, be guilty of a criminal breach of trust'.<sup>306</sup> In the understanding of conservative commentators, there was no unitary national community which could decide on a course of action; the nation was merely an aggregate of individuals and classes, not an entity of its own, and the statesmen had been given the interests of their countrymen in trust.<sup>307</sup>

Conservative commentators' stress on the duty of statesmen towards their fellow citizens allowed them to argue that any desire on the part of statesmen to act on their personal ethical ideals for the European realm was a violation of the moral standard by which a statesman's actions were to be judged. Statesmen, argued conservatives, had the duty to pursue the particular 'honour and interests' of their country.<sup>308</sup>

As a consequence, conservatives were consistently critical of what they saw as the tendency of liberal statesmen to abandon their duty in favour of the pursuit of their own ethical ideals. As Oliphant admonished the liberals during the crisis which led to the unification of Italy, 'the only duty of a British statesman is to watch over the interests of his country. The freedom which should be dearest to him should be British freedom. The only liberties for which he should feel active sympathy should be the liberties of his compatriots'.<sup>309</sup> Cecil, arguing almost two decades later against Gladstone's Christian humanitarianism as a basis for foreign policy, asserted 'that the first business of the English Government is, as honest trustees, to consider English interests, and that if they swerve out of their personal feelings or wishes one iota from the straight line, they are guilty of breaking a trust which is reposed in them'.<sup>310</sup>

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291-2).

<sup>305</sup> Craik and Smith (1877: 287).

<sup>306</sup> Craik and Smith (1877: 287).

<sup>307</sup> Craik and Smith (1877: 291-4). See also Burrows (1877: 536); Cowell (1877e: 643-4); Frere (1876: 512); Hamley (1877a: 768); Smith and Layard (1877: 291-2).

<sup>308</sup> Gleig (1866: 642) and Hamley (1870c: 788) and Patterson (1864b: 639) and Swayne (1867: 198). See also Cecil (1864a: 240); (1864b: 525); (1871: 268-9); Gleig (1866: 649, 656); (1870a: 649); Hamley (1871c: 505-6); Lever (1870c: 509); (1871a: 230); Oliphant (1864a: 395).

<sup>309</sup> Oliphant (1860a: 359-60). See also Aytoun (1860: 252); Beresford Hope (1862: 43, 115-6); Cecil (1859: 11); (1862a: 207-9); (1862b: 535, 570); Lytton in Urban (1938: 276) Oliphant (1860b: 649-50); Patterson (1860: 140-8); (1862c: 512-3, 517-8). Hamley (1862a: 120); (1863b: 636-8, 646-7); (1864a: 458); Spence (1861: 304-5); (1862: 10-11); Wolseley (1863: 25).

<sup>310</sup> Cecil (1877c).

### Perceiving international politics through a moral lens

Conservatives were critical about what they saw as the tendency of liberals to warp the complex realities of international diplomacy into an abstract, morally informed interpretative framework – one which, they argued, did not work at all in explaining the *de facto* course of international politics, and the alignments of great powers and their interests by which it was produced.

Morality, conservatives asserted, had not gained any novel purchase on international politics. Passion and other destructive emotions were rather the persisting influences on a state's foreign policy, steering it away from the course prescribed by reason. Lever observed that 'men's passions of jealousy, malice, vanity, and rivalry are not less dominant in the age we live in than two thousand years ago', while Cecil argued that the Franco-Prussian war had shown that 'the highest education, the most advanced civilisation, do not stifle the original passions of the noble savage'.<sup>311</sup> The precepts of ethics had no influence on the course of international politics.

There was, conservatives thought, no absolute right and wrong in international politics. Since there existed no universal ethics by which claims and aspirations could be considered, disputes over interests were for conservatives a matter for settlement rather than for judgement.<sup>312</sup> Patterson stated that 'every Government has objects and interests peculiar to itself, and as long as it pursues these objects in a legitimate fashion there can be no ground for censure'.<sup>313</sup> Statesmen could not be faulted for acting in the best interest of their country, even if other countries' interests consequently suffered.<sup>314</sup> Neither should one side slyly introduce an overarching morality, Oliphant admonished, by second-guessing another country's statesmen: 'they are likely to be better judges than we are of what is best for their own interest'.<sup>315</sup> Even in the case of war, he argued, there was no call for third parties to apply strict moral categories, placing one side in the right or wrong. Rather, Britain was just to stay neutral if the war involved none of her interests, 'while, in the event of a war in which neutrality is impossible, a skilful diplomacy should always place us on the strongest side'.<sup>316</sup>

Conservatives even assigned merely a minor role to morality when what was at

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<sup>311</sup> Lever (1871c: 445-6); Cecil (1871: 270); see also Hamley (1871a: 240); Lever (1871a: 236); (1871c: 173).

<sup>312</sup> See e.g. Gleig (1866: 650); Lever (1871c: 446). To the extent that conservatives cared to label acts as right or wrong, they emphasised the value of the established order. See chapter 5.

<sup>313</sup> Patterson (1864a: 114).

<sup>314</sup> Gleig (1870a: 648, 654-5); Oliphant (1864a: 386); Patterson (1864a: 126).

<sup>315</sup> Oliphant (1865: 126); see also Cecil (1864a: 240).

stake in a dispute were not interests, as usual, but rather the very independence of a state. In this context conservatives did speak of 'international rights' of states.<sup>317</sup> These rights were not, however, based in any moral standard, for instance regarding the self-government of peoples.<sup>318</sup> This right of states meant that the practice of their rule was established and was recognised as such by the other states. States were not bound strongly by an objective morality, but merely weakly by their own previous promises and commitments.<sup>319</sup> While conservatives might have considered the initial attack on the independence of a polity as a wrong, they also exhibited a strong sense that once any conquest was in fact accomplished, there was not much of a case left. Success and failure were more relevant than right and wrong. Lever noted, regarding the 'offence' of the Italian annexation of the Papal States, that 'all Ministries like the *fait accompli*, whatever it be'.<sup>320</sup>

Conservatives consequently asserted that international diplomacy should start from the established facts on the ground. Any other approach was too likely to find the statesman working at an oblique angle to reality, ignoring the forces actually shaping events in favour of focusing on the imagined, ideal state of affairs.<sup>321</sup> Conservatives thus had no sense of a grand ethical framework underlying international affairs. Liberals did generally perceive international affairs through a moral lens. They placed both the Crimean War and the unification of Italy in the broader context of the struggle between liberalism and autocracy in Europe, often closely connected the American civil war to the issue of slavery, saw the Franco-Prussian war as a conflict between different morally charged values, and in 1876-78 apprehended the Eastern Question through a Christian humanitarianism.<sup>322</sup> For conservatives these episodes were instead about the particular great power politics involved - and if they perceived any grand narrative during the 1850s and 1860s, then it was not one of a struggle between liberty and autocracy, but one of the France of Napoleon III overturning the existing European order.

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<sup>316</sup> Oliphant (1864a: 383).

<sup>317</sup> Patterson (1864a: 131); see also Cecil (1864a: 247-8); Oliphant (1864a: 385-6, 369); (1864b: 506).

<sup>318</sup> Dasent (1870: 296-7).

<sup>319</sup> Cecil (1864a: 285-6); (1871: 282-3); Patterson (1864a: 130); Oliphant (1864a: 396).

<sup>320</sup> Lever (1871f: 729); see also Oliphant (1864a: 386); Wilson (1871b: 361). See also Wilson (1870: 380) and Lever (1870c: 509) on acknowledging the de facto rulers of countries, whatever their ideological hue.

<sup>321</sup> They even argued thus when the *fait accompli* in question went against their desires, as with Piedmont's annexation of Central Italy. Aytoun (1860: 246, 248); Cecil (1862: 216); Lever (1863b: 656-7, 665). See also the *Morning Herald*, Nov. 16 1859.

<sup>322</sup> Beales (1961: 34); Campbell (2003: 48-9, 96); Parry (1996: 168); (2006: 4-5, 212, 214, 218, 221, 223, 228, 230-1, 282, 327-8, 333-5); Porter (1984: 426-7); Urban (1938: 117-8, 121-2). Cecil characterised the liberals' morally informed perspective on the Franco-Prussian war as one of the 'peculiarities of English political thought'. Cecil (1870: 544-5); see e.g. Gladstone (1870: 564-7).

Unlike liberals, conservative commentators did not cast the Crimean War as part of a struggle between progressive liberal trends and autocratic reaction.<sup>323</sup> Liberals' and conservatives' different lenses led to different views on the utility of the Concert of Europe in arriving at peace terms. Using the Concert primarily meant involving Austria. As a consequence, for Whigs and Peelites the Concert was fundamentally flawed, 'too much the tool of autocratic Europe'.<sup>324</sup> Through the liberals' moral lens, Austria was like Russia an autocratic power, and in that sense as much of an enemy.<sup>325</sup> Through the conservatives' lens of great power politics, the war was about a Russian threat to the balance of power, in which case Austria was a likely ally. Conservatives consequently still considered the Concert as a worthwhile foreign policy tool.

When considering Italian affairs in 1859-61, conservatives rejected the liberal perspective of a moral framework suffusing international affairs. Liberals generally assumed that the position which European powers took regarding Italian affairs was determined by their involvement in the grand struggle between liberty and autocracy.<sup>326</sup> Conservative commentators instead assumed that states would consider their interests and the great power politics of Europe in determining their stance. Conservatives concluded that Russia would welcome the developments in Italy, as they weakened Austria and would make her more likely to agree to the spoliation of the Ottoman Empire, while Prussia would oppose them, as they weakened the position of the Germanic states vis-a-vis France. Liberals, in contrast, assumed that both Russia and Prussia, together with Austria and the Pope, might form 'a formidable conspiracy' against the Italian cause, since it involved the progress of liberty and the retreat of autocratic rule.<sup>327</sup>

This difference of perspective was expressed most vehemently regarding the role of France. Liberals debated amongst themselves whether Napoleon III had involved himself in Italian events with aggrandising or with idealistic aims – in order to expand French influence and territory, or in order to bring glory to France by furthering the cause of Italian liberty.<sup>328</sup> Liberal statesmen and commentators may have been 'not too confident of Napoleon's integrity', but unlike conservatives they considered

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<sup>323</sup> Cecil (1855: 1600-1); Disraeli (1855: 1731, 1734, 1740); E.B. Hamley (1855e: 617); (1856a: 238-9, 241); Libri and Guizot (1855: 494); Lytton (1855: 1380); Northcote (1855: 1442); Patterson (1855a: 103); (1855c: 632, 636); Swayne (1854a: 591-2); (1854b: 718); (1855b: 186).

<sup>324</sup> Parry (2006: 214).

<sup>325</sup> Martin (1924: 131, 228-9).

<sup>326</sup> See e.g. Schreuder (1970: 488-90).

<sup>327</sup> Gladstone (1860: 103).

<sup>328</sup> Beales (1954: 96); (1961: 50); Parry (2006: 226-8); Varouxakis (2002a: 153-4).

France's positive influence a possibility in the first place.<sup>329</sup> Among liberals, the notion that a restraining alliance between Britain and France would wean the latter off its aggressive attitude and be a force for progress in Europe was popular.<sup>330</sup> Conservatives, in contrast, were adamant that the changing great power politics of Europe necessitated the formation of a general coalition *against* France, to prevent the European order unravelling and the instigation of another general war. Conservatives were annoyed and exasperated that liberals considered the aims and results of French policy even a matter for reflection and uncertainty.<sup>331</sup>

Conservative commentators thought that liberals let themselves be deceived by their ideological commitments and by Napoleon III's appeals to their values. The Liberal government's policy, they thought, compounded one delusion with another: first came the idea that Britain ought to prioritise a vague set of ethical ideals, including the sentiment of nationality; this then combined with the notion that Cavour and Napoleon III could possibly be acting in order to further those ideals, rather than for their own gain – an outlandish notion, conservatives thought, but one which liberals wanted to believe, since they valued their ideals so much.<sup>332</sup> Conservatives latched on to the cession and annexation of Savoy and Nice as a particularly crass example of French concern with territorial gain, with no thought given to popular will.<sup>333</sup> Liberals indeed quickly lost any trust they might have placed in Napoleon III as a force for progress. Still, their value commitments kept them far from reacting to events as conservatives wished. Russell, for instance, valued Italian independence more than he feared Napoleon III's intentions, arguing that 'if we can save Italy from dependence ... it shall not break my heart if we do a favour to Napoleon at the same time!'.<sup>334</sup>

During the American Civil War, conservative commentators tried to win their audience over in favour of British recognition of the South. In order to do so, they argued against perceiving the issue through legal or moral principles. Rather than start from an abstract right or wrong, conservatives intimated, the discussion ought to be based on the *de facto* state of affairs. By rejecting the relevance of legal and moral issues,

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<sup>329</sup> Urban (1938: 127-8, 130, 297-9).

<sup>330</sup> See e.g. Gladstone (1860: 100-1). See further Beales (1954: 97); (1961: 143-4); Parry (2006: 235); Urban (1938: 350, 359).

<sup>331</sup> See e.g. Atkinson (1859: 350); Tremenheere (1859: 260).

<sup>332</sup> Aytoun (1860: 245, 247-8, 252); Forsyth (1860: 107); (1861: 134-5, 140-1, 150); Hardman (1859: 618-9); Oliphant (1860a: 357, 359-60, 362-3); (1860b: 638); (1860c: 734, 740); Patterson (1859a: 388); (1859b: 376-7, 380-1); (1860: 14-15, 48-51, 75-8, 97-9, 119-26, 140-6); (1862b: 255, 517-8); *The Standard* (January 14, 1860); Swayne (1861: 83-4); Tremenheere (1859: 244, 259-60).

<sup>333</sup> Oliphant (1860b, especially 641, 643); (1860c, especially 735, 742-4); Forsyth (1860, especially 107-8).

<sup>334</sup> Russell cited in Beales (1961: 114). See also Gladstone (1860: 103-4).



conservatives tried to sidestep the arguments surrounding the legality of secession under the constitution of the Union — events had clearly overtaken them.<sup>335</sup> More importantly, they hoped to weaken the adverse influence of the institution of slavery on British sympathy for the South. They asserted that the basis of the conflict lay in the conflicting economic interests of North and South. The issue of slavery had merely been co-opted into this more fundamental divide.<sup>336</sup> The South's case for independence, conservatives argued, should consequently be judged on the basis of the Union's skewed political system and the consequent set of specific, legitimate Southern grievances — such as the tariff on foreign manufactures — rather than on the issue of slavery and its abolition — a general ethical principle only tangentially related to the matter at hand.<sup>337</sup>

Moreover, by privileging the *de facto* state of affairs, conservatives hoped to compel British recognition of what they saw as the *fait accompli* of Southern independence. Regardless of whether the South had the right to secede, conservatives were confident that when the South did manage to establish its independence from the North, other states would recognise it: 'if the Confederate States are successful in establishing their independence ... [they] will be admitted into the family of nations'.<sup>338</sup> Conservatives presented a conflict between moral or legal theory and state practice, between *de jure* arguments and the *de facto* situation, as a reason to discard the theory, rather than to adjust the practice.

Anticipating a reluctance on the part of liberal statesmen to recognise the South because of its institution of slavery, conservatives asserted that actual independence should be the only criterion for recognition. Here the conservatives appealed to liberals' previous exhortations for British recognition of the independence of secessionist governments or even plain insurrections, from South America, Belgium, and Greece to Naples, long before these had established a government over their territories as comprehensive as that of the South.<sup>339</sup>

So, what made for *de facto* independence? Independence, conservatives thought,

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<sup>335</sup> Cecil (1861: 270); Bourke (1862: 348-50); Forsyth (1862: 239); Hamley (1861a: 127-8, 132-3); (1862d: 374, 634-5); Ross (1865b: 165); Wolseley (1863: 3).

<sup>336</sup> For many liberals, the issue of slavery loomed large and was their main reason for condemning the Southern cause. See Campbell (2003: 48-9, 96), and e.g. Cairnes (1863).

<sup>337</sup> Beresford Hope (1862: 43, 55-60, 93-4); (1863: 13-16, 23, 32); Bourke (1861: 758-9); Cecil (1861: 271); Forsyth (1862: 243-8); Hamley (1861a: 125); Mackay (1866a: 25-27); Montagu (1861: 5-11, 51-2); Spence (1861: ch4-5).

<sup>338</sup> Forsyth (1862: 252). See also Cecil (1862: 564, 567, 570); Spence (1862: 6).

<sup>339</sup> Cecil (1861: 270); (1862: 564, 567-8) Forsyth (1862: 277); Patterson (1862a: 645-6); Spence (1862: 5-10, 48).

consisted of establishing an effective government over a certain territory and having the ability to prevent the conquest of this territory by other states.<sup>340</sup> By late 1862, after the South had repulsed several Northern invasions of Virginia, conservative commentators became impatient with the Liberal government (and with Derby down-playing the issue in Parliament) and argued that recognition was overdue.<sup>341</sup> Patterson was representative of conservative opinion, arguing that the South had repeatedly 'rolled back the tide of invasion', and should, despite the continuing warfare, be recognised as an independent state.<sup>342</sup>

During the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78, conservatives again argued that the affair ought not to be perceived through the liberals' moral lens, in this case of Christian humanitarianism. Rather, conservatives thought, a framework of great power politics and Russian aggressive expansionism worked to explain the course and character of events.<sup>343</sup> Conservative commentators argued that Russia's policy was only ostensibly based on a humanitarian aim to save Christian Slavs from the oppression of Muslim Turks. This they considered merely a veneer – 'it seems hardly conceivable that this pretension should by some men ... be accepted as representing a fact' – in reality the Russian cabinet was purely concerned with Russia's territorial aggrandisement.<sup>344</sup> Three facts, conservatives argued, made this evident: the history of the Russian empire, one of steady territorial expansion;<sup>345</sup> the efforts of the Russians to incite disturbances in the European provinces, eliciting Turkish mistreatment in the first place;<sup>346</sup> and Russia's invasion of the Caucasus, an area wholly unrelated to its stated humanitarian concerns.<sup>347</sup> At the same time, conservatives thought, the other great powers would not particularly care about Russian behaviour towards Turkey unless Russia seemed poised to make large gains, thereby threatening their established interests – only their interests,

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<sup>340</sup> Beresford Hope (1862: 8); (1863: 41, 43); Cecil (1862: 563-4); (1865: 250-1, 285-6); Forsyth (1862: 277); Hamley (1862a: 129-30); (1864a: 447); Spence (1862: 3); Wolesley (1863: 24-5).

<sup>341</sup> Derby did not want to press the Liberal government on recognition for the South, at least partly due to issues of parliamentary politics. He himself admitted that this put him at odds with many of his 'personal and political friends', who thought 'that we should recognise the Southern Republic' (Derby 1863: 23-6). See e.g. Crook (1974: 214-5, 241, 327); Jones (1953: 529, 534-6).

<sup>342</sup> Patterson (1862a: 637).

<sup>343</sup> Burrows (1877: 536); Cowell (1876b: 249, 256-7); (1877b: 260); (1877f: 748); (1877h: 621-2); (1878b: 255); (1878d: 515-6); Craik (1878a: 266); Frere (1876: 484, 502); Hamley (1877b: 116); (1878b: 233); Smith (1876: 580); Smith and Cowell (1877: 573); Smith and Layard (1877: 290).

<sup>344</sup> Keppel (1878: 544, also 538); see also Cowell (1876e: 769; 1877e: 640); Hamley (1877g: 760); Russell (1877: 211, 240).

<sup>345</sup> Keppel (1878: 538, 544); Russell (1877: 240).

<sup>346</sup> Craik (1877: 558, 560; 1878a: 262); Craik and Smith (1877: 277); Smith and Layard (1877: 286-7).

<sup>347</sup> Russell (1877: 240).

not certain moral notions, would lead the great powers to act to contain Russia.<sup>348</sup>

Conservatives thought that liberals' ethical commitments led them into a myopic view of international affairs. Liberals certainly also worried about aggressive states, not least Napoleon III's France, but for them aggression was one concern possibly counterbalanced by the progress which a particular conflict might make possible. France's victory over Austria made the unification of Italy possible, the North's victory over the South abolition, Prussia's victory over France the unification of Germany, and Russia's invasion of the Ottoman Empire might be a boon to its Christian subject populations. Conservative commentators complained that this concern over progress of various sorts distracted liberals from the real concerns of international politics, British interests and the possibility of any conflict escalating into widespread war across Europe.

Finally, the limited role for morality in conservative commentary on international affairs is illustrated particularly well by the contrast between liberal and conservative judgements on the peace terms of the Franco-Prussian war. Both liberal and conservative commentators overwhelmingly argued against the German annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, but where liberals invoked the putative immorality of such an annexation, conservative commentators argued for its irrationality.

In the British commentary on the Franco-Prussian war, the peace terms which Prussia demanded from France were a major topic of debate. Most conservative commentators, like their liberal counterparts, focused on the Prussian demand for Alsace and Lorraine. Conservatives thought the annexations significant primarily because it promised future war and disorder in Europe.<sup>349</sup> With this in mind, they asserted that Prussia's demand for territory was ill-advised and short-sighted, while stopping short of declaring Prussia's demand for territory immoral or illegitimate. In this they contrasted sharply with liberals, who thought the significance of any transfer of territory lay primarily in whether it corresponded to the imperatives of ethics. Gladstone stated that annexation was only 'justified ... [if] the population be willing parties to the severance'.<sup>350</sup> Since the people of Alsace and Lorraine had no wish to join Germany, the demands of Prussia, Gladstone thought, were 'repulsive to the sense of modern civilisation'.<sup>351</sup> Gladstone assumed that the terms of peace were subject to the

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<sup>348</sup> Cowell (1877b: 250-1); Craik (1878a: 262-3); Hamley (1877c: 250).

<sup>349</sup> Cecil (1870: 546-7 and 551); Dasent (1870: 313); Hamley (1871c: 488-93).

<sup>350</sup> Gladstone (1870: 582); see also Bagehot (1870); (1871a). See further Pratt (1985: 565-6); Schreuder (1978: 112).

<sup>351</sup> Gladstone to Granville, 4 Oct 1870, quoted in Schreuder (1978: 114).

same ethical considerations as all of international politics. Indeed, it was Britain's role to consider, based on its insight into this universal ethics, whether it could 'accept the present reported position either of the one party or the other'.<sup>352</sup> Conservatives rejected this moralising liberal perspective. No party external to the conflict was to involve itself and declare right or wrong; 'are we, the neutrals, the men who did nothing but sell powder and ball to the combatants', Lever asked rhetorically, 'are we to step in now and dictate the terms the conqueror should exact?'<sup>353</sup>

Conservatives recognised that victory in war, especially a defensive war, implied a right to territorial gain; there were 'precedents ... for treating cessions of territory as the natural prize of a successful campaign'.<sup>354</sup> Unlike liberals, they did not think that there was a moral argument to be made against annexation. They instead presented the German demand as a practical mistake. Annexation was not a military necessity and consequently harmed the stature of Prussia, since it indicated a lack of moderation among its statesmen. Moreover, these people, given their French national sentiment, would be disloyal subjects. Finally, the French themselves would desire revenge for their loss of territory and soon instigate another war.<sup>355</sup> Annexation would on balance weaken the German state, rather than strengthen it, and commit it to the horrors of war in the future – it was, conservatives asserted, not the rational path to take.

#### The rights and wrongs of intervention in international politics

Together with many other mid-Victorian commentators on international affairs, conservatives discussed the ethics of intervention, of involving oneself in the dispute of others. The category of intervention already implied a situation somewhat different from the usual. A great power could involve itself in any issue which significantly touched upon its interests. Intervention was then when a great power involved itself, through coercion and the possible use of force, in an existing dispute which did not directly impinge on its interests. When did a state have a right to do so, when even the duty, and when was it prohibited from doing so? These were major, contested issues in mid-Victorian debates on international relations.

Conservatives approached these questions by first of all taking a step back and

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<sup>352</sup> Gladstone (1870: 582); see also Schreuder (1978: 110).

<sup>353</sup> Lever (1870c: 512). The liberal Cairnes expressed the exact opposite opinion, quoted in Varouxakis (2013c: 138).

<sup>354</sup> Cecil (1870: 543); see also Hamley (1871c: 488); Lever (1870c: 511).

<sup>355</sup> Cecil (1870: 540, 543-4, 547-52); Dasent (1870: 309-13, 318); Gleig (1866: 652); Hamley (1871a: 254-5); (1871c: 488, 492-3); Lever (1870c: 510-12); Oliphant (1864b: 511); Wilson (1871b: 370).

reaffirming the centrality of interests to any decisions on foreign policy. 'The question of intervention or non-intervention', Patterson remarked concerning the Polish question, 'despite all the prate we have had of late years about the "principle of non-intervention" ... is simply one of self-interest. If a State have an interest in intervening, and thinks itself sufficiently powerful to intervene with success, it will intervene. If it have no adequate interest in the matter, or if it lack the power to intervene with success, it will not intervene'.<sup>356</sup> A "principle" would not stop states from interfering when they wanted to, while sympathy and sentiment would, or at least should, not lead a state to intervene without it having both interests involved and the applicable force to succeed.

Conservatives argued that there was no prescriptive role for ethics or morality regarding intervention. Britain, Patterson argued, was 'not bound to intervene in the Polish question otherwise than by diplomacy. ... there is no international obligation upon us to do more'.<sup>357</sup> The proscription of intervention was a more ambiguous matter. While conservatives did not affirm a clear proscription, they did recognise situations where states had no adequate reason to interfere, no reason to coerce other parties into a particular mutual arrangement. In the context of the Franco-Prussian war, Lever argued that neutral states had no business 'dictating the terms the conqueror should exact' after a war.<sup>358</sup> In the debates surrounding the unification of Italy, Oliphant asserted that 'the only occasions upon which we should interfere in European quarrels are when our own interests are either directly or indirectly affected'.<sup>359</sup> Indeed, it was exactly because British interests were involved to a major extent in the Eastern Question that Britain could reasonably intervene forcefully to secure its influence.<sup>360</sup> Neither was there a sense that one could interfere in aid of a suffering nationality. Even if the German population of Denmark was being oppressed, Cecil argued in 1864, 'the title of Germany to interfere is not very obvious'.<sup>361</sup>

Conservatives were thus generally against intervention. They had two reasons for their disapproval. Firstly, they thought intervention would lead to an unsustainable settlement, with the issue soon causing disorder and instability in international affairs yet again. The force of the intervening state was needed to tip the scales, but this state

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<sup>356</sup> Patterson (1864a: 124). Earlier, in 1855, Patterson had similarly argued that 'in practice ... the question with the intervener is merely one of self-interest and of power'. Patterson (1855b: 236-7).

<sup>357</sup> Patterson (1864a: 125).

<sup>358</sup> Lever (1870c: 512).

<sup>359</sup> Oliphant (1860a: 359-60). Compare also with Lytton in Urban (1938: 276).

<sup>360</sup> Cowell (1878a: 100); (1878b: 245, 250); (1878c: 380-1); (1878e: 636, 638-9, 652); (1878g: 119, 122); Craik (1878a: 262-3); Hamley (1878a: 123-4); (1878b: 232); (1878c: 372-3); Keppel (1878: 557-8, 570); Northcote (1877: 68); (1878: 360-1); Shand (1878: 736-7).

lacked an enduring interest in the issue at hand (which was what characterised the episode as one of intervention rather than international politics as usual). This lack of an enduring interest meant that the force would not remain present to sustain the settlement; the accord would soon unravel.<sup>362</sup> This conservative perspective was even confirmed by the one case in which they did argue for clear intervention, in the American civil war. Conservatives here made sure to argue, as examined directly below, why the usual constraint on worthwhile intervention did not apply. Secondly, conservatives rejected liberal claims, as made in the debates on Italian unification and the Eastern Question crisis, that intervention would bolster the cause of progress. Conservatives here argued that the interventions contemplated or condoned would do little to achieve their imagined ends, while doing significant harm to the fabric of order and stability in Europe.

One of the main topics of debate among conservative commentators during the American civil war was whether, or rather when, Britain ought to recognise the South as an independent state. Recognition of the South's independence meant more, to conservatives, than merely a formal statement of moral support — they assumed that recognition implied forceful intervention. Derby for instance argued in late 1862 and early 1863, as enthusiasm in the cabinet for British involvement was at its height, that recognition 'means nothing unless the Powers who join in it are ready to support by force of arms the claims of the State which they recognise'.<sup>363</sup>

A decision on recognition would consequently follow from a decision on the worth of forceful British intervention. Conservative opinion on the most apt course of action for Britain changed from an affirmation of neutrality at first, to advocacy of intervention in favour of the South by late 1862, and subsided only by 1865 into resignation at the South's defeat.<sup>364</sup> The barrier to war with the North was eroded among conservatives by perceived harm to British interests — in the North's blockade of Southern cotton exports — and to Britain's stature among nations — in the North's insolent behaviour in its various disputes with Britain. Furthermore, conservatives came

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<sup>361</sup> Cecil (1864a: 269).

<sup>362</sup> See e.g. Oliphant (1864a: 388, 393) for the most general statement of this rationale.

<sup>363</sup> Derby (1863). While most conservative commentators advocated exactly such action, neither Derby nor the Liberal cabinet were willing to risk war with the North. See Adams (1957: 232-4); Campbell (2003: 177-9). See also Beresford Hope (1863: 41); Cecil (1862: 564); Hamley (1863b: 652); Patterson (1862a: 645-6); Spence (1862: 46-47).

<sup>364</sup> For the initial affirmation of non-involvement, see e.g. Beresford Hope (1862: 39); Ferguson (1861: 779); Forsyth (1862: 257); Hamley (1862b: 533-4). Conservatives, indeed British commentators in general, long assumed that the South would gain independence. See Beresford Hope (1862: 37); (1863: 34); Cecil (1862: 537); (1865: 256, 258); Ferguson (1861: 769, 779); Hamley (1863c: 768); Montagu (1861: 91); Ross

to regard the war itself as something of a travesty. The purpose of war was to make a settlement possible.<sup>365</sup> The US civil war, conservatives argued, no longer served this purpose, which made intervention reasonable.

The conservatives' argument here had two strands. Firstly, after the South had repulsed several Northern invasions of Virginia, the war had fulfilled its function in amply proving the ability and the willingness of the South to govern itself and to secure its independence. As per the *raison d'être* of war, the North should have realised this and granted the South its independence. The war was still dragging on, conservatives implied, only because the North was delusional, blinded by its passion for revenge and for the prestige of unity into thinking it could preserve the Union.<sup>366</sup> External intervention would then consist of making the North see sense, in affirming to it an already existing reality, and would *not* be the external imposition of a settlement without a basis in the relative power of the parties involved – the situation to be avoided.

Secondly, conservatives had a strong sense that war ought to be limited. War was an affair between governments, and their purpose-built institutions, armies. As the civil war dragged on, the “total war” waged by the North strongly offended the sensibilities of conservatives, indeed of British observers in general.<sup>367</sup> Conservative commentators were very vocal on this point, speaking for instance of ‘savagery’, ‘a war of extermination’, and the North’s aim ‘to burn, destroy, and devastate’.<sup>368</sup> External intervention was, conservatives argued, not only in the British interest, nor only an act to hasten the inevitable, but it ‘would render an important service to civilisation, humanity, and mankind at large’, in putting a halt to the North’s vile way of warfare, and seeing that it be not rewarded for such behaviour.<sup>369</sup>

In combining their observations of the South’s *de facto* independence and the horrors of the North’s delusional “total war”, conservatives could argue for this particular intervention to cut the war short, while still affirming their general conceptualisation of war as a means to arrive at a durable settlement and their consequent rejection of intervention as undermining this purpose.

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(1865b: 171); Wolseley (1863: 17, 24). See also Campbell (2003: 59).

<sup>365</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>366</sup> Cecil (1862: 537, 565-7); (1865: 259, 261); Patterson (1862a: 628); Spence (1862: 34-5).

<sup>367</sup> See e.g. Campbell (2003: 104); Whitridge (1962: 692-3). Mill, on the other hand, considered the possibility of abolition worth a long war (Varouxakis 2013b: 735-6, 741).

<sup>368</sup> Cecil (1865: 270-2); Patterson (1862a: 636); Fremantle (1863: 365, see also 368, 371, 374, 389). See further Beresford Hope (1862: 41, 97-8); (1863: 8-9); Cecil (1862: 537); (1865: 250); Chesney (1863); Forsyth (1862: 278); Hamley (1862a: 123); (1863b: 652); (1863c: 756); (1864b: 642); Mackay (1866b: 636); Ross (1865a: 26); (1865b: 159, 161, 174); Spence (1862: 3, 34-5, 44).

<sup>369</sup> Patterson (1862a: 645-6); see also Beresford Hope (1862: 115-6); Spence (1862: 33).

If conservatives thought that any kind of intervention usually had little to recommend itself, they were particularly disapproving of intervention for moral reasons. Such interventions created conflict and disorder where none needed exist. Conservatives argued this point most forcefully during the crisis which led to the unification of Italy, and it would recur in the debates on the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78. In the latter, conservatives argued that any intervention in the Ottoman Empire's European provinces would result in all the suffering attendant to war, without it delivering the positive ends imagined; 'experience has shown that interference from without aggravates the disorder, and is seldom able to apply a remedy' and 'we doubt ... whether armed intervention, be it executed with the purest intentions and the most irresistible force, be a fitting remedy for evils such as exist in Turkey'.<sup>370</sup>

Conservatives rejected the interventions involved in the unification of Italy, for two different reasons. Firstly, compared to liberals, conservatives perceived less of a gain from allowing Italian events and interventions, which went against the Vienna settlement, to come to fruition. Secondly, and most importantly, conservatives had a far stronger sense than liberals that these interventions, and their being condoned and approved, would have a major deleterious effect on the order and stability of Europe.

Liberals desired the removal of Austria and its influence from Italy in order to make the spread of constitutional liberty possible. They preferred for Austria to be shut out of Italy through the revision of the existing treaties which allowed for the Austrian presence, rather than their abrogation – but this was a mere preference. If respect for the treaty system became an obstacle to the realisation of their ideals, then liberals such as Gladstone and Palmerston were willing to allow the treaties' abrogation through war.<sup>371</sup> This willingness on the part of liberals to justify infringements on the treaty system only increased as the affair progressed. Liberal statesmen worked actively to avoid a European Congress which might decide to restore reactionary rule to central Italy.<sup>372</sup> They valued giving Piedmont a free hand in Italy – given the likelihood of Piedmont extending its constitutional government – over upholding the existing diplomatic order.

Compared to liberals, conservatives perceived less of a gain from condoning interventions against established treaty rights. Liberals valued and increasingly

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<sup>370</sup> Smith and Cowell (1877: 589) and Hamley (1877f: 652). See also Cowell (1876b: 252); (1876d: 636); (1877a: 108); Craik (1878a: 266); Frere (1876: 504-5); Hamley (1878b: 225-6); Smith (1876: 555).

<sup>371</sup> Gladstone (1860: 103); Palmerston quoted in Hicks (2007: 234). See further Beales (1954: 96, 99); (1961: 52-3, 93-6); Urban (1938: 129, 140-1).

<sup>372</sup> See e.g. Gladstone (1860: 102). See further McIntire (1983: 147-8, 212-3).



conceptually intertwined the ends of administrative and legal reform, liberty, national independence, and national unification.<sup>373</sup> Conservatives, in contrast, rejected the value of national unity.<sup>374</sup> They thought that national independence would not ensure better government.<sup>375</sup> And they argued that neither liberty nor better administration and the rule of law had been realised for the peoples of Southern Italy.<sup>376</sup>

More important than their scepticism regarding any positive effects of intervention was that conservatives, with their focus on great power politics and state aggression, had a far stronger sense than liberals that Italian events had a major deleterious effect on the stability and order of Europe. Compared to liberals, conservatives had a different understanding of what external intervention consisted of in the context of Italy. In determining which acts counted as the intervention of one state in the internal affairs of another, conservatives based themselves on the *de facto* politics of Italy, rather than the imagined Italian nationality and its associated territory.<sup>377</sup> As a consequence, where liberals considered the interactions between the different Italian actors part of the internal development of the Italian nation, and argued that these domestic processes should be guarded from interference by external, foreign actors such as France or Austria, conservatives considered the Italian politics as sovereign actors in their own right, with no special dispensation on interference between them merely because they shared a language or geographical location, in the Italian peninsula.<sup>378</sup>

Consequently, where liberals could posit themselves as the defenders of the liberty and free will of peoples against the desires for external intervention held by the autocratic states of Europe, conservatives understood this liberal position as one of the enthusiastic affirmation of ‘the right of one independent State to interfere and foment insurrection in the dominion of another’, when that intervention was predicated on a

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<sup>373</sup> See Beales (1954: 99); Beales and Biagini (2002: 7); McIntire (1983: 127); Schreuder (1970: 491). See also e.g. Arnold (1859: 4-11); Gladstone quoted in Beales (1954: 99) and (1961: 169); Mill quoted in Varouxakis (2002b: 91-2); Russell quoted in McIntire (1983: 150, 166).

<sup>374</sup> Atkinson (1859: 350-1, 353, 365); Aytoun (1860: 253); Cecil (1862: 225); Forsyth (1861: 135, 148-9); Lever (1863b: 657, 659); Oliphant (1860b: 636-7, 645-6); Swayne (1856: 88-90); Tremenheere (1859: 243-4, 261-2); Tremenheere and Portland (1865: 373, 401-2); White (1861).

<sup>375</sup> Atkinson (1859: 350-1, 354, 365); Cecil (1859: 2-3, 27); Forsyth (1861: 143-4); Hardman (1858: 464); Lever (1863b: 655); (1863c: 54); Oliphant (1860a: 357); (1860b: 649); (1860c: 738); Patterson (1859a: 380); (1862c: 503-4); Swayne (1856: 87-90); (1861: 84); Tremenheere (1859: 244, 261-2, 268); Tremenheere and Portland (1865: 403).

<sup>376</sup> Lever (1863a: 576-7, 580-1, 583, 585); (1863b: 659); (1863c: 54). See also the predictions of Atkinson (1859: 350-1, 355, 365); Cecil (1859: 3-4); Hardman (1859: 623); Oliphant (1860a: 359); Swayne (1856: 87-9); Tremenheere (1859: 261-2).

<sup>377</sup> See e.g. Aytoun (1860: 253); Forsyth (1861: 148-9); Lever (1863a: 580-1); Swayne (1856: 88-9); Tremenheere (1859: 261-2). This point is discussed in detail in chapter 5.

claim to be acting for the correct ideals – a people oppressed, a nationality without a state, or one with a state not of the proper extent.<sup>379</sup> They worried about the implications which the use of these justifications would have for the future of international politics. Once idealistic excuses for aggrandising interventions were accepted, these excuses, in the guise of oppressed peoples and nationalities unable to flourish, would everywhere be found. Who, after all, was to be the effective judge of whether there was an idealistic cause to act upon? 'Who is to decide', Patterson asked, 'what "civilization" is, or when and how it ought to be made to prevail?'<sup>380</sup>

Whereas liberals assumed that European public opinion – in the abstracted and truncated sense of those commentators who assented to the liberal set of overarching ethics – would judge whether a case for intervention was to be made, conservatives were too sceptical of the efficacy of both words alone and non-state actors in general to consider European public opinion as a significant influence on a state's policy. No, conservatives argued, it was far too easy for less naive, more aggressively ambitious actors in international affairs than the British liberals to adopt these same principles as a scheme of justification, twist the meaning of these to suit their interests, and set off on a course of conquest.<sup>381</sup> This was the role in which Patterson cast the principle of nationality in his discussion of Napoleon III's foreign policy. The principle of nationality was merely an excuse, a convenient framework of justification, which Napoleon III could use in order to dismantle the Vienna settlement and with it the existing order of Europe.<sup>382</sup> The affirmation of external intervention under the banner of the principles of nationality and the sovereignty of peoples merely provided a facile excuse for the aggression of any states with a penchant for aggrandisement. An increase in conflict and the spread of disorder and instability would consequently be the result.<sup>383</sup>

The divide between liberals and conservatives consequently extended beyond their notion of wherein consisted external intervention, to the reasons they had for considering such intervention problematic in the first place. Liberals considered external

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<sup>378</sup> See e.g. Aytoun (1860: 253); Forsyth (1861: 148-50).

<sup>379</sup> Forsyth (1861: 135). See also Cecil (1862: 230, 235); Forsyth (1861: 150, 154-5, 166-7). Whigs made the same point, not least Acton (1862). See also the discussion of Henry Reeve's thought on nationality in chapter 6.

<sup>380</sup> Patterson (1860: 14). See also for a similar point e.g. Forsyth (1861: 157).

<sup>381</sup> Aytoun (1860: 245, 247); Cecil (1862: 231, 235); Forsyth (1861: 148-50); Oliphant (1860a: 359-60); Patterson (1859b: 375, 380-1);

<sup>382</sup> Patterson (1860: 34, 41-51, 94-9).

<sup>383</sup> Atkinson (1859: 350); Aytoun (1860: 245, 247); Cecil (1859: 4, 20); (1862: 221-2, 229-31, 236); Forsyth (1860: 107-8); (1861: 135, 154-5, 166-7); Hardman (1859: 618-9); Lever (1863b: 656-6, 665); (1863c: 61); Oliphant (1860a: 359-60); (1860c: 736); Patterson (1859a: 388); (1859b: 380-1); (1860: 34, 94-7, 125-6); (1862a: 340); Tremenheere (1859: 259-60, 267-8);

intervention undesirable because of its domestic effects in the recipient country; because it stopped the people from exercising their will, from deciding on the character of their government. For Mill, for instance, external intervention was wrong because it prejudiced the self-determination of peoples. One instance of this effect would be a people who, as a nation, were restrained by a backwards empire from establishing a nation-state. In this way, liberals considered external intervention as a tool especially of the reactionary, absolutist powers, used to retard the progress towards constitutional politics and the realisation of the principle of nationality which would occur if a people were left to decide on their future independent of foreign interference. Consequently, once external intervention was established, there was only a prudential, and no longer a moral, barrier to intervention by other states aimed at redressing this state of intervention – such as intervention in Italy in order to shut Austria out from its affairs.<sup>384</sup>

This contrasts with the position taken by conservatives. For conservatives, external intervention was a wrong not so much because of its effect on the country intervened in, but because of its effect on the international sphere. The Italian intervention broke down the settlement arrived at in Vienna, diminished respect for treaties, and most of all provided novel justifications for forceful meddling in the affairs of other states. In general, intervention where no interests were at stake would lead to an unsustainable settlement between the main countries involved and merely set the stage for future conflict. Intervention for moral reasons in particular conservatives considered even worse. The intervention itself would likely be of little positive value, while it would delegitimise the established order of Europe and provide facile justifications for the aggressive policies of ambitious statesmen. Cecil explicitly asserted that any “moral” intervention aimed at a change in government, regardless of whether the change desired was progressive or reactionary, had ill effects on the European order, by making domestic issues such as regime type a topic of international politics and thereby setting a precedent for future disorder.<sup>385</sup>

## Conclusion

Conservatives thought that states could take a moderate or aggressive attitude in their

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<sup>384</sup> See Mill (1859); (1865). See also Varouxakis (2002b: 77-8, 85-6).

<sup>385</sup> Cecil (1862: 212-214, 231). British conservatives were in this different from the European conservative mainstream, whose ‘conclusion was that the solution to [states’ destabilising] social problems lay in coordinated international action’ (Keene 2005: 173).

international relations. A state with a moderate attitude would seek to avoid war when possible and work to foster stability and order. An aggressive attitude, in contrast, meant that war was seen as a desirable means to gain glory and aggrandisement. Conservative commentators connected the moderate attitude with a foreign policy based in reason and aimed at safeguarding a state's interests and honour, while they associated aggression with various passions: for military glory, for territory, and for revenge, all possibly fostered further by a sentiment of nationality. Conservatives moreover thought of reason as the realm of statesmen, with the passions connected to the people; consequently, they emphasised the importance of a public properly deferential to the judgement of its statesmen and warned of the dangers of politicians pandering to the passions and desires of the people. The duty of statesmen was to act in the interests of the country. Both pandering and following one's own ethical vision, conservatives asserted, amounted to a betrayal of this duty. They further argued that perceiving international affairs through a moral lens — apprehending events by whether they furthered one's ideals — led to a warped understanding of the causal influences at play — of the intentions and acts of other states — and to a mistaken set of priorities, placing the interests and position of Britain in peril. Conservatives particularly disapproved of intervention to further some ideal. This would merely foment conflict, they asserted, while generally not realising the ends sought — even if conservative commentators recognised these ideals as valid aspirations in the first place. Most of all, asserting the legitimacy of intervention for certain moral ends gave a *carte blanche* to states pursuing a policy of martial glory and territorial aggrandisement, if only they paid lip service to liberal ideals. That, conservatives concluded, was no way to keep moderation central to international affairs.

### III. The dynamics of international politics

This chapter analyses conservative thought on the interactions between states. It first argues that for conservatives the primacy of interests and force fundamentally shaped the dynamics of international relations. The chapter then shows how other important facets of their thought followed from this foundation, and ends with an analysis of two major conservative criticisms of British liberal statesmanship, which were based in this understanding of the workings of international relations. In a sense, this chapter analyses conservatives' micro-view of international relations, what conservatives thought about individual issues in international politics and how they were resolved, as contrasted to the next chapter's macro-view, of the European order in general, and how it was threatened and sustained.

#### The primacy of interests

Conservatives assumed that interests were the central concern of international politics. Each country had interests of its own, and conservatives considered it to be perfectly natural that different states pursued their own interests and that these clashed: 'a great nation has, or ought to have, its matured national policy – and any other nation may object to that policy, and may condemn it as dangerous to its own interests'.<sup>386</sup> When countries' interests were in conflict statesmen would need to interact and somehow resolve the dispute, through diplomacy or the use of force. Statesmen consequently occupied themselves not with realising ethical ideals or with measures of relative power, but interacted with each other on the basis of their differing or converging interests.<sup>387</sup>

This lack of a role for ideology or morality led conservatives to view particular affairs differently from their liberal interlocutors. They concluded that Russia, contrary to those liberal analyses based on regime type, would welcome the developments of 1859-60 in Italy, as these weakened Austria and would make her more likely to agree to the spoliation of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>388</sup> Regarding the Eastern Question itself, conservatives assumed that it, in its various manifestations over these decades, always revolved around the differing interests of the great powers involved. During the 1876-

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<sup>386</sup> Cowell (1878b: 255). See also Cecil (1871: 267-8); Dasent (1870: 322); Gleig (1870a: 655); Patterson (1862a: 337); (1862b: 260); (1864a: 114, 126); Smith and Layard (1877: 290); Wilson (1871a: 92); (1871b: 372-3).

<sup>387</sup> Burrows (1877: 536); Cecil (1864a: 284); Cowell (1876b: 249); (1877f: 748); (1877h: 621); (1878c: 377); (1878d: 515-6); Dasent (1870: 301-2); Gleig (1866: 648-50); C. Hamley (1877b: 116); (1878b: 233); Lever (1870b: 599-600); (1870c: 510); (1871a: 230); Oliphant (1864a: 383, 389); Patterson (1864a: 112, 114, 123-4, 126); (1864b: 639, 641); (1864c: 253-4); Wilson (1871a: 83, 87); (1871b: 372-3).

<sup>388</sup> See e.g. Oliphant (1860c: 734); Patterson (1859a: 387).

78 crisis, conservative commentators emphasised that the great powers' cabinets cared only about territory and the 'trusteeship of the Bosphorus'.<sup>389</sup> No states were moved by a concern over the internal policy of the Ottoman Empire towards its subject peoples.<sup>390</sup> In the Black Sea affair of November 1870 British interests, as well as British honour, demanded a forceful response to Russia's abrogation of the neutrality of the Black Sea.<sup>391</sup> Finally, the Crimean War revolved not around liberty and autocracy, but was fuelled by Russian aggrandisement and Britain and France's concern over their position in Europe. A Russian hegemony over Eastern Europe, which would be the result of its acquisition of the Ottoman territories, would seriously constrain the influence of Britain and France in Europe.<sup>392</sup>

While interests were the focus of international affairs, these could be defined broadly. In general terms, foreign policies identified by conservatives as in pursuit of a country's interests could pertain to the country's security, prosperity, or great power status.<sup>393</sup> As well as dealing with any existing disputes over particular interests, statesmen needed to tend to their country's position in the field of great power politics.<sup>394</sup> A state had a good position, conservatives thought, if other states felt obliged to attend to its wishes and take its intentions into account. As part and parcel of this concern with great power politics, statesmen would aim to sustain a general balance of power in Europe to prevent any one state gaining a position of hegemony.<sup>395</sup> This concern with the relative positions of great powers in the international sphere led conservatives to regard most European affairs as relevant to Britain. If other great powers were involved, then chances were that certain outcomes of the issue would affect Britain's position in Europe. Since most of international politics involved great powers, and not many directly involved Britain's particular interests, the *de facto* concerns of international

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<sup>389</sup> Frere (1876: 484); see also Cowell (1877b: 260); (1877f: 748); (1877h: 622); Craik (1878a: 266); Frere (1876: 502); Hamley (1877b: 116) Keppel (1878: 538, 544); Russell (1877: 211, 240); Smith (1876: 580); Smith and Cowell (1877: 573).

<sup>390</sup> As Cowell put it (1877b: 256-7): 'The Eastern Question is far less one of adjusting the relation of the Porte to its subjects than of the international rivalries of the surrounding Powers.'

<sup>391</sup> *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 17, p. 4); (Nov. 19, p. 4); (Dec. 5, p. 4); Manners (1871: 947-8, 952); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 15, p. 4); (1870, Nov. 16, p. 4) (Nov. 19, p. 4); (Nov. 22, p. 4); (Nov. 24, p. 4); (Nov. 25, p. 4); (Nov. 28, p. 4).

<sup>392</sup> Alison (1855: 135); Disraeli (1855: 1737); Elwin (1854: 295, 299); C. Hamley (1855a: 644-5); (1855b: 144); E.B. Hamley (1855c: 353); Libri and Guizot (1855: 494, 499-500); Lytton (1855: 1392); Mildmay (1853: 26-7); Patterson (1855a: 107-8); (1855b: 231); (1855c: 633-4); Swayne (1854a: 592).

<sup>393</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1864a: 238, 284); (1870: 545); Oliphant (1864a: 383); Wilson (1870: 388).

<sup>394</sup> Cecil (1870: 556); (1871: 281-2); Dasein (1870: 314); Gleig (1866: 642); (1870a: 656); Hamley (1870c: 786-7); (1871c: 501, 506); Oliphant (1864a: 386, 395); (1864b: 518); (1865: 118); Patterson (1864a: 112); (1864c: 243); Swayne (1867: 196).

<sup>395</sup> Cecil (1864a: 280); (1870: 543); Lever (1870b: 600-2); Oliphant (1865: 118); Patterson (1864a: 110); Wilson (1870: 380).

politics, for conservatives, were sometimes particular interests, but more often great power politics and the spectre of general war and disorder.<sup>396</sup>

The Danish Duchies affair was an example of how concern over particular interests could shade into concern over great power politics. Cecil, for instance, hoped to compel Britain's involvement in the affair by arguing that Britain's future ability to secure its commercial interests would be impaired if it allowed Kiel to fall into the hands of Prussia or Russia.<sup>397</sup> In the same context, Oliphant argued that the creation of a Scandinavian empire would be 'in the interest of England', since it would function as 'a counterpoise to Russia', ensuring that the latter could not close the shipping lanes of the Baltic to trade.<sup>398</sup> Near the end of the Crimean War, similar considerations of great power politics had tempted conservative commentators to argue for a continuation of the conflict. They noted, among other points, that a military campaign in the Baltic would enable Britain to destroy Russia's Baltic fleet, thereby obviating the dangerous possibility of a future naval alliance between Russia and France, and making Britain for the foreseeable future utterly secure in its control of the seas.<sup>399</sup> A campaign in the Caucasus, meanwhile, would help to check Russia's incremental expansion into Asia – which constituted a threat to British India.<sup>400</sup> Conservative commentators were allured by the advantages they thought Britain could gain in its position among the great powers.<sup>401</sup>

The conservatives' understanding of the rightful concerns of international politics contrasted with that of the liberals. For Gladstone and liberals like him, a country's focus on self-interest, honour, and relative position were the hallmarks of continental policy and un-English.<sup>402</sup> Moreover, conflict between countries was the result of a misguided selfishness, a lack of insight into the overarching ethics informing the European sphere. Conservatives, in contrast, thought that Britain participated in international politics on the same terms as the other great powers, part of exactly the same dynamic of international relations and with exactly the same concerns over its interests and its position among the great powers.

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<sup>396</sup> See e.g. Oliphant's article 'The European Situation' (1865). See also Swayne (1867: 196); Wilson (1870: 380). Conservatives' worry about the possibility of widespread war and disorder is discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>397</sup> Cecil (1864a: 284).

<sup>398</sup> Oliphant (1864a: 389); see also (1864b: 506).

<sup>399</sup> Elwin (1854: 295-6); C. Hamley (1855c: 428); Patterson (1856a: 617); (1856b: 734).

<sup>400</sup> Elwin (1854: 295-6); E.B. (Hamley (1856a: 240-1); Patterson (1856a: 617); Oliphant (1856: 485).

<sup>401</sup> Dasent (1870: 294-6, 312); Gleig (1870a: 648-9, 651); Hamley (1864b: 506); (1870c: 782-3, 790); (1871c: 496); Lever (1870b: 600-2); Oliphant (1864a: 389, 369); (1865: 118); Patterson (1864a: 110); (1864b: 644-6); (1864c: 253); Swayne (1867: 196-7); Wilson (1871a: 81-2); (1871b: 364).

Conservatives argued that Britain's influence followed not from its moral authority, but from its position in the field of great power politics. Remonstrations regarding morality and ethics, conservatives thought, were only 'too apt to be set aside by the human passions and immediate interests concerned'.<sup>403</sup> Statesmen in particular, Hamley noted, 'openly disavow a higher law than that of expediency ... appeal to high feeling is in vain'.<sup>404</sup> Sentiment about the Poles, Patterson for instance remarked regarding the Polish Question, would not determine the outcome of the affair. An independent Poland as a possible counterweight to Russia, a natural ally to France, and a likely rival to Prussia – these were the strategic concerns which would guide the decisions of statesmen.<sup>405</sup> Hamley was an especially fierce critic of the position taken by liberals. He noted that Gladstone's characterisation of the European sphere 'sees them [the countries of Europe] as bound together by ties of affection, of common interest, of similar habits and breeding, of like associations'.<sup>406</sup> According to Hamley, 'this is the very opposite of fact'; all states had differing interests which led to disputes, some of which turned violent.<sup>407</sup> International politics was adversarial rather than associational, and Britain could not keep aloof from Continental political manoeuvring.

Conservatives additionally argued that countries which did act to effect peace in Europe or in otherwise ostensibly ethical ways did not do so from any ethical imperative, but because such a policy was in their interest. Patterson, commenting on the diplomatic manoeuvring by great powers over Poland, argued that 'by proposing a scheme which ostensibly aims at the pacification of Europe, he [Napoleon III] prepares a justification for the warlike policy which he may ultimately adopt'; Lever and Hamley argued that Britain's high-handed neutrality in the Franco-Prussian war was 'mock philanthropy' barely obscuring its self-interest in staying out of the war; and Cecil, discussing the Danish Duchies affair, argued that the 'ostensible ground of her [Germany's] interference', namely 'good government for Holstein', was merely an excuse for territorial aggrandisement.<sup>408</sup> States did occasionally act for laudable ends, but only because these happened also to be in their interest.

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<sup>402</sup> Gladstone (1870: 556, 588, 590-1); see also Parry (2006: 253-255).

<sup>403</sup> Wilson (1871a: 92).

<sup>404</sup> Hamley (1871c: 503), directly against Gladstone (1870: 593). See also Gleig (1866: 647); Lever (1871e: 445-6); (1871f: 729); Patterson (1864a: 122-4); (1864b: 647); Wilson (1871b: 361).

<sup>405</sup> Patterson (1864a: 122-3, 125).

<sup>406</sup> Hamley (1871a: 240).

<sup>407</sup> Hamley (1871a: 240).

<sup>408</sup> Patterson (1864a: 118) and Lever (1870c: 510) and Cecil (1864a: 267-8, 275); see also Cecil (1864a:



### The resolution of conflicts over interests: settlements and compromise

Conservatives thought that disputes over interests were resolved through settlements. A settlement was a mutual understanding between states regarding the extent to which their conflicting interests would be honoured. States, Lever explained, would 'discuss some question of international difficulty, and arrive at some mode of solution sufficiently palatable to be acceded to by all'.<sup>409</sup> Through a settlement, a dispute would be resolved for the moment, the issue removed from the day to day attentions of statesmen. A particular settlement was thus an element of the order of Europe.<sup>410</sup>

Particular issues in international affairs were characterised by a breakdown of the existing settlement of relative interests between the states involved. International politics was about adjusting the realisation of these interests into a new settlement, either through diplomacy or through the use of force. Conservatives thought international politics was adversarial, in that these relations revolved around disputes over incommensurable interests and their differential realisation in settlements. But they did not advocate a zero-sum view of international politics, such as, say, where only mere power relations were relevant and one side's gain was another's loss, with constant fluidity. Conservatives recognised states' different ability and willingness to secure their interests and consequently affirmed the need for compromise and settlement. In these established settlements, in the great powers' mutual recognition of their interests, lay the possibility of stability and order in Europe.

For statesmen to arrive at a settlement, conservatives thought, they would need to be somewhat pragmatic in their aims. The absolutes of ethical ideals and popular passions, of 'imagination' and 'intolerance', would merely lead states 'to the pitch of internecine conflict'.<sup>411</sup> A 'compromise alone could settle a dispute'.<sup>412</sup> Cowell observed regarding the Eastern Question in 1878 that Britain 'cannot hope to have [its] own way entirely'; it should insist only on those matters 'vitally necessary to secure our interests' and otherwise 'be contented to acquiesce in considerable changes'.<sup>413</sup> Conservatives consequently asserted, with their liberal interlocutors in mind, that a reasonable statesman would aim not for a supposedly just resolution, based on an abstract notion

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242); Hamley (1870a: 385); Lever (1871c: 178); Patterson (1864b: 128-9).

<sup>409</sup> Lever (1871a: 231).

<sup>410</sup> Dasent (1870: 300); Patterson (1864a: 110-1).

<sup>411</sup> Wilson (1870: 385).

<sup>412</sup> Lever (1872: 365). See also Cecil (1864a: 255); Dasent (1870: 300); Gleig (1866: 650); Lever (1870b: 559); (1872: 365); Oliphant (1864b: 518); Patterson (1864a: 111, 118, 122, 127); Wilson (1870: 385); (1871a: 83).

<sup>413</sup> Cowell (1878g: 130 and 1878d: 511-2).

of right and wrong, but would pursue only a settlement between the parties, which each somewhat compromising its interests.<sup>414</sup>

States could reach a settlement either through diplomacy or through the use of force. Both means involved gaining a sense of relative strength and commitment, and adjusting to what seemed inevitable. Diplomacy was preferable, but if both sides held very different estimations of their strength, it would likely come to war.<sup>415</sup> As Patterson remarked, 'after a severe war such rough compromises become possible', which before no statesman would have considered.<sup>416</sup> Diplomacy was consequently not a venue for arbitration based on arguments of right and wrong under international or universal moral laws. Diplomacy was an opportunity for states to gain knowledge of each other's aims and intentions and to compromise and reach consensus on a dispute.<sup>417</sup> It resulted in a temporary, but ideally durable settlement of the dispute; not in a permanent settlement, as there could be no basis for a permanent judgement.<sup>418</sup> Conservatives considered diplomacy and war not as different realms, but rather as existing on a continuum, obeying the same underlying dynamics.

For a settlement to endure, it needed to reflect the interests and concerns of every state powerful and assertive enough to influence the outcome of the dispute.<sup>419</sup> Conservatives consequently argued that the great powers' general interest in any European affair and their strength compelled their involvement in most settlements. Patterson for instance asserted, regarding the Danish Duchies affair, that 'the Schleswig question is a European one which cannot be settled by the present belligerents alone ... [the exclusion of the other great powers] ought never to have been allowed'.<sup>420</sup>

Conservatives understood for instance the Eastern Question as such a settlement of interests between the great powers which was adjusted at every point of crisis. At the time of the Black Sea affair (1870), the established settlement consisted of the Paris Treaty of 1856, which had concluded the Crimean war. However, Russia had rejected the clauses which barred its navy from the Black Sea, thereby compromising

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<sup>414</sup> See e.g. Dasent (1870: 300-2).

<sup>415</sup> Lever (1870b: 559); (1872: 365); Patterson (1864a: 110-1, 127).

<sup>416</sup> Patterson (1864a: 122).

<sup>417</sup> See e.g. Lever (1871a: 231); Patterson (1864a: 112).

<sup>418</sup> This contrasted with Gladstone's advocacy for the 'permanent and not temporary' settlement of disputes according to the 'idea of Public Right' (Gladstone 1870: 593).

<sup>419</sup> Carnarvon (1878); Cowell (1877a: 115; (1878c: 277); 1878d: 514; 1878g: 123, 126-7; 1878h: 250; 1878j: 499-500). Cowell (1876c: 461-2; 1876d: 645; 1877b: 245, 256-7; 1877c: 361; 1877e: 634; 1877f: 737; 1878d: 510; 1878g: 120); Craik (1878a: 261-2); Derby (1878); Hamley (1877b: 113); Smith and Cowell (1877: 573).

<sup>420</sup> Patterson (1864b: 640); see also Cecil (1864a: 279).

the other great powers' interests and resulting in a breakdown of the settlement.<sup>421</sup> When the *modus vivendi* had been disturbed, the great powers would aim to arrive at a new understanding amongst one another, either through diplomacy or the use of force. In the case of Russia and the Black Sea clause, the Paris Treaty of 1856 was peacefully modified in the Conference of London in 1871, thereby confirming the adjusted understanding between the great powers and establishing a revised settlement.<sup>422</sup> By the start of the 1876-78 Eastern Question crisis the established settlement was consequently the Paris Treaty of 1856, as modified in the Conference of London in 1871.<sup>423</sup> Russia, however, acted on its ever-present desire to conquer parts of the Ottoman Empire, an endeavour which, if successful, would further Russian interests at the expense of those of the other great powers, thus upsetting the *modus vivendi*.<sup>424</sup> After the Russian-Turkish war had started, conservative commentators again recognised that the established settlement would have to be modified in order to make all the great powers willing to agree to it again.<sup>425</sup> This perspective corresponded well to the general conservative stance towards institutional change: a general aim to preserve existing institutions, reforming them only when, due to changed circumstances, this was necessary for the institution to carry out its original role — in the context of settlements in international affairs, of fostering stability and keeping the peace.

### **The primacy of force**

#### The potential use of force and its role in international politics

Conservatives assumed that international relations always involved the implicit possibility of the use of force. International politics was mainly about settling disputes, in cases where the interests of different states clashed. In resolving these disputes, the actual and potential use of force played a central role. Diplomacy and force formed the duality through which conservatives understood action in international politics.<sup>426</sup> A

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<sup>421</sup> See e.g. Burrows (1877: 542-4); Cowell (1877f: 746); Northcote and Allardyce (1878: 770-1); Smith and Cowell (1877: 596).

<sup>422</sup> Hamley (1871a: 244).

<sup>423</sup> Cowell (1877a: 109; 1877d: 517; 1878g: 122); Keppel (1878: 567).

<sup>424</sup> Cowell (1877a: 110; 1878c: 374, 377; 1878j: 499-500); Hamley (1877c: 250); Keppel (1878: 567). The conservatives conceived of Russia's main interest as expansion of the territory under its control, compromising Austria's and Germany's interests in free trade on the Danube and in the subdued, passive character of the European provinces of the Ottoman empire, and English commercial and military interests in the Straits and the Caucasus. See Cowell (1878a: 100-1); Craik (1878a: 266); Hamley (1877c: 250).

<sup>425</sup> Cowell (1878f: 774 and 1877a: 109-10, 115); see also Cowell (1877b: 245; 1877d: 517); (1878e: 641); (1878g: 122); Hamley (1878b: 233).

<sup>426</sup> Clerke (1878: 233); Cowell ((1876d: 636; 1876e: 768; 1877f: 738; 1877h: 623); Craik (1878a: 273-4); Hamley (1878a: 112); Northcote (1877: 68-9). Also see Hamley (1877a: 764; 1878a: 112) and Russell (1877:

dispute could at one point in time be settled through negotiations, which might fail and lead to military conflict, after which the issue could be 'reclaimed from the arbitrament of war' through a discussion of the terms for peace over an armistice.<sup>427</sup> But in this understanding, conservatives considered the use of military force, and especially the consciousness of its possibility, as more fundamental than diplomacy. Indeed, they saw successful diplomacy as resting wholly on the latent possibility of the use of force.

This assumption by conservatives that a state's diplomatic influence on other states was in the end a function of its military power came to the fore in their commentary on Russia's role in Europe during the Crimean War. Conservative commentators were alarmed by the prospect of Russian territorial aggrandisement, because Russia would then be in a position of such overwhelming power with regards to the states of central Europe – and its influence on them would consequently be so vast – that these states would all but lose their independence. Conversely, near the end of the Crimean War conservatives noted that Russia had been weakened. Since, they assumed, 'her enormous influence is, as it were, a paper-circulation issued on the faith of her vast military strength', they were satisfied that Russia would soon lose influence among its neighbours.<sup>428</sup>

Most fundamentally, conservatives asserted that other states would only respect a state's interests and refrain from compromising these if they believed that the state would, *in extremis*, use force to stop them.<sup>429</sup> For instance, Gleig complained in 1870 that 'our neighbours, ... seeing how powerless we are to act, have ceased to pay more heed than suits their own convenience to our wishes when we express them'.<sup>430</sup> A state's influence in international politics depended on other states perceiving it as willing and able to use force to gain its ends.<sup>431</sup>

This assumption recurred again and again in conservatives' analyses. Northcote stated in 1877 that to be successful, diplomats needed to be able to deploy 'the menace

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241) for tentative suggestions that, in cases where diplomacy was ineffectual, but the use of force disproportional, Britain could further its interests through the financial support of other states.

<sup>427</sup> Cowell (1878i: 376).

<sup>428</sup> Patterson (1855c: 643-4). See also C. Hamley (1855c: 428); Patterson (1855b: 231, 238).

<sup>429</sup> Alison (1855: 123, 135); Aytoun (1854: 599, 604-6, 617); Cecil (1855: 1601, 1603-4); Elwin (1854: 278-9); E.B. Hamley (1855c: 351); (1856a: 241-2); Lytton (1855: 1383); Patterson (1855a: 102, 107-8); (1855b: 243, 248); (1855c: 639); (1856b: 733); Swayne (1856: 388-9, 403).

<sup>430</sup> Gleig (1870a: 656). See also for the same sentiment Cecil (1871: 284-5); Chesney (1867: 82); Dasent (1870: 316); Hamley (1871c: 504).

<sup>431</sup> Cecil (1864a: 251, 270, 284-5); (1864b: 524-5, 529); (1870: 541); (1871: 284); Chesney (1867: 69); Dasent (1870: 317); Gleig (1866: 644, 647-9); (1870a: 650, 656); Hamley (1870c: 790); (1871c: 501, 504); Oliphant (1864b: 504); (1865: 118, 121); Patterson (1864a: 112-3); (1864b: 638, 640-1, 648); (1864c: 244); Wilson (1870: 381).

of coercive measures if necessary', 'to back up their remonstrances'.<sup>432</sup> Contemplating British involvement in the American civil war, conservative commentators assumed that the North would take no cognisance of mere words, and Britain would have to act, to destroy the Northern blockade at least, for any deviation from neutrality and non-involvement to be meaningful.<sup>433</sup> Several years later Cecil remarked, regarding the Germans' self-serving interpretations of the treaties involved in the Danish Duchies affair, that 'if the case had not a Federal army at its back, it would not bear a moment's argument'.<sup>434</sup> Dasent observed in 1870 that 'words ... [were] rather ridiculous than effectual if they are not accompanied by corresponding action'.<sup>435</sup> And *The Globe* consequently felt comfortable asserting that 'England has not the usual weight she ought to have, because she has not the physical force necessary to back it'.<sup>436</sup> For conservatives, words of whatever character had potency only because they indicated plausible acts, and all acts in the end boiled down to the potential use of military force.<sup>437</sup>

Since influence abroad only followed from a state's power, it then did not follow from any more nebulous authority. Conservatives rejected in particular the alternative liberal notion, identified with Gladstone's attitude to international politics, that 'moral influence' – 'that cheap sort of advice and scolding' – could be an effective tool of foreign policy.<sup>438</sup> They were quick to assert the futility of mere moral support or denunciation, given without the willingness to bolster this verbal approbation or disapproval with the application of force. Patterson remarked in 1855 that 'with Russia, as with all States, her moral power is based on her physical. Strike a body-blow at the latter, and the former will collapse'.<sup>439</sup> During the crisis which led to the unification of Italy, Atkinson argued that 'an appeal to national sympathies may win hearts, but cannot gain battles. ... stumbling against the first hard fact, imagination trips and falls, and the

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<sup>432</sup> Northcote (1877: 72; see also 69).

<sup>433</sup> Beresford Hope (1863: 41); Cecil (1862: 564); Derby (1863); Hamley (1863b: 652); Patterson (1862a: 645-6); Spence (1862: 46-47). See also Adams (1957: 232-4); Campbell (2003: 177-9).

<sup>434</sup> Cecil (1864a: 270).

<sup>435</sup> Dasent (1870: 317). Many liberals, among whom J.S. Mill, disagreed and thought moral condemnation without any further action was a 'commendable innovation in the relations between states' (Varouxakis 2013c: 130).

<sup>436</sup> *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 23, p. 4). See also W.G. Hamley (1870c: 789); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 11, p. 4); (Nov. 28, p. 4); (Dec. 19, p. 4).

<sup>437</sup> *The Globe* (1870, Nov 29, p. 4); Manners (1871: 947-8); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 23, p. 4); (Nov. 25, p. 4); (Dec. 14, p. 4); (Dec. 19, p. 4).

<sup>438</sup> Cecil (1871: 285); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 16, p. 4). See also Cecil (1864b: 525); Hamley (1871a: 239-40).

<sup>439</sup> Patterson (1855c: 643-4). See also Aytoun (1854: 599); Patterson (1856b: 731); Swayne (1854a: 597).

fairy fabric melts into thin air'.<sup>440</sup> Not only was this moral verbiage useless, the preoccupation with conveying their moral judgements and sympathies also led liberal statesmen to neglect the sphere of positive action – they 'were', Hardman admonished in 1859, 'great in sympathy and promises, but lamentably slack in performance'.<sup>441</sup>

For conservatives a successful diplomacy depended on military power *and* a recognised willingness to deploy that power to secure the interests at stake.<sup>442</sup> The only means of dispute arbitration in international relations was the potential or actual use of force. Hamley well reflected conservative opinion when he remarked that 'the good old plan, that they will take who have the power, and they may keep who can, was never more practically effective than now'.<sup>443</sup> Cecil pithily remarked regarding the plight of Denmark: 'There was no help for it. The weak must yield'.<sup>444</sup> Wilson argued that the disputes of 1866 and 1870 had descended into war because Austria and France did not want to concede to Prussia a superior position without the proof that Prussia could back its claims by force, the proof of war.<sup>445</sup> Extending his use of this principle, Wilson argued also that Prussia would not have taken any of the three major steps of its ascent – the Danish, Austrian, and French wars – if Britain had shown credible intent to use force against Prussia, instead of merely remonstrating while all but ruling out action to back up these words.<sup>446</sup>

Finally, in the debates on the Eastern Question from 1876-80, conservative commentators argued repeatedly that success through negotiations was dependent on having a recognised willingness and ability to deploy military force in order to secure one's interests.<sup>447</sup> In the initial stages of the Eastern Question, the focus of the British debates was on Ottoman governance of its European provinces. The Constantinople Conference was intended to settle this matter, but the decisions made by the great powers were rejected by Turkey. Conservative commentators argued that the Conference failed in this respect because, except for Russia, the great powers were unwilling to back their demands for reform with the threat of military intervention – the

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<sup>440</sup> Atkinson (1859: 352-3). See also Oliphant (1860a: 363); Patterson (1860: 14-15); (1862: 343).

<sup>441</sup> Hardman (1859: 617). See also Patterson (1860: 152); Swayne (1859: 745-7).

<sup>442</sup> Cecil (1864a: 251, 284-5); (1870: 541); Hamley (1870c: 790); (1871c: 501); Oliphant (1865: 121); Patterson (1864a: 113, 116, 120-1); (1864b: 640); (1864c: 244); Swayne (1867: 196).

<sup>443</sup> Hamley (1871a: 240) and Wilson (1871b: 366) for a variant. Both paraphrased these lines from a poem by William Wordsworth, *Rob Roy's Grave*, from 1803. See also Cecil (1864a: 254); Hamley (1870c: 787); (1871a: 239-41); (1871c: 489, 495, 503, 505-6); Oliphant (1865: 128).

<sup>444</sup> Cecil (1864a: 253).

<sup>445</sup> Wilson (1871a: 82); see also Swayne (1867: 196).

<sup>446</sup> Wilson (1870: 380-1).

<sup>447</sup> Clerke (1878: 233, 252-3); Cowell (1876a: 88; 1876b: 246).

decisions were 'only to be enforced by moral persuasion'.<sup>448</sup> Turkey could consequently feel comfortable in rejecting the great powers' demands.

After the war and the armistice of San Stefano, conservative commentators' attention shifted to the diplomacy among the great powers, and particularly to the need to extract concessions from Russia. At this point Cowell argued that 'if this country is to exercise its just influence upon the final settlement, it must show itself to be ready and prepared for the alternative of war'.<sup>449</sup> In particular, Parliament ought to approve a bill of credit for possible military action, so that the government could make a credible threat to use military force.<sup>450</sup> If Britain and the other great powers in concert were to threaten Russia with war, 'she would yield to our reasonable demands' – diplomacy worked when it was backed by the threat of force.<sup>451</sup>

Conservatives conceived of the instruments of diplomacy as a means to prevent war, to avoid the *actual* use of force. Force was the only standard by which disputes over interests could be resolved, but diplomacy could function as a simulacrum of actual war. Through a course of negotiations, statesmen could convey to each other their ability and willingness to use force in order to secure the interests under dispute. This hypothesised struggle would then suggest to them a compromise, based on the likely results of a real conflict, thereby obviating the need for the actual use of force. Conservatives stressed the importance of negotiations, settlements, and respect for treaties especially because they considered these essential for mitigating the practical implications of the centrality of the use of force to international politics.

And despite military force being central to their creation, conservatives considered the resulting settlements as a source of stability.<sup>452</sup> The balance reflected in a settlement was not one of military power pure and simple, but of realised interests, as adjusted for relative power. Power differences — short of a situation of hegemony — were no impediment to stability and peace. Their destabilising implications were neutralised as they were translated into differentially realised interests, which were then codified in a settlement.

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<sup>448</sup> Cowell (1877b: 250-1). See also Cowell (1877b: 246); (1876d: 643); (1877c: 361, 370); (1877d: 509); (1877e: 640); Hamley (1877f: 653-4).

<sup>449</sup> Cowell (1878a: 103; see also 1878i: 366-7, 376); see also Clerke (1878: 233); Hamley (1878b: 233-4); Shand (1878: 754).

<sup>450</sup> Cowell (1878c: 381; 1878i: 367); Hamley (1878a: 111).

<sup>451</sup> Keppel (1878: 570); see also Cowell (1878d).

<sup>452</sup> Cecil (1864a: 255, 257); Dasent (1870: 300); Lever (1869: 357, 359); (1870b: 599-601); (1872: 365-6); Oliphant (1864a: 386, 395); (1865: 118); Patterson (1864a: 110); (1864c: 247); Wilson (1871a: 83).

### War, the actual use of force, and its role in international politics

When considering the actual rather than potential use of force, conservative commentary emphasised the destruction and suffering which war caused. War, conservatives stated, should never be encouraged or entered lightly; a 'policy of peace' was generally one of 'wisdom', given 'the horrors of war'.<sup>453</sup> Only when crucial interests were involved would the gains of war possibly be worth the costs.<sup>454</sup>

The inadvisability of recourse to war held especially, conservatives emphasised, for the use of force in pursuit of some higher ideal, rather than interests or stature: 'nothing is more unprincipled than wars of principle', Wilson stated in 1871, 'if principles are to be judged by actions'.<sup>455</sup> In the context of the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78, conservatives argued, of Russia's supposedly humanitarian war to end Turkish rule over the European provinces, that 'it may be truly said that the remedy has been infinitely worse than the disease'.<sup>456</sup> Due to the suffering inherently involved, war was seldom a proper means to right a perceived wrong.

Conservatives evinced no sense of progress limiting the incidence or the horrors of war. If anything, they thought, technological advances only made war more contagious and more destructive – 'increased knowledge had shown how to multiply destruction and intensify ruin'.<sup>457</sup> Conservatives particularly abhorred the suffering involved in the American civil war.<sup>458</sup> The Franco-Prussian war led them to the conclusion that modern warfare happened quickly — but was also more intense.<sup>459</sup> If anything, war was now potentially even more destructive, as illustrated by Hamley with some pathos: 'in two months a smiling and fruitful country might be pillaged and trampled into a desert, and made to flow with tears and blood'.<sup>460</sup>

Conservative commentators also asserted that the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78 had disproven the conceit that war had become increasingly rare in frequency and constrained in operation. Progress was supposed to have led to fewer wars, but the opposite seemed to have happened: 'in extending their communications, nations have

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<sup>453</sup> Cowell (1876d: 636) and Dasent (1870: 301); see also Cecil (1870: 552); (1871: 270, 285); Cowell (1877b: 254); (1878k: 757); Gleig (1870a: 656); Hamley (1877f: 653-4); Lever (1870b: 601-2).

<sup>454</sup> Patterson (1864c: 253 and 254); Swayne (1867: 195).

<sup>455</sup> Wilson (1871a: 90).

<sup>456</sup> Hamley (1878d: 499). See also Cowell (1876d: 640); (1877c: 361, 370-1); (1876d: 640); (1877e: 640); Hamley (1877f: 652).

<sup>457</sup> Hamley (1878c: 354); see also Hamley (1871c: 501).

<sup>458</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>459</sup> Hamley (1870c: 786); (1871c: 497).

<sup>460</sup> Hamley (1871b: 382); see also Cecil (1870: 552); (1871: 270, 285); Dasent (1870: 301); Gleig (1870a: 656); Lever (1870b: 601-2). For a more nuanced account of the positive and negative effects of scientific progress on war, see Tollemache (1871).



also extended their interests. Every state in Europe is more or less interested in everything that can befall any other European state'.<sup>461</sup> Everyone now took sides in every conflict, so conflicts would spread and spiral out of control more easily. Conservatives consequently regarded alleged pacifists such as Cobden as 'mere dreamers' with a 'complacent estimation of [Europe]'.<sup>462</sup> There was, based on 'recent experiences', concluded Burrows in 1877, 'no reason to believe that ... the causes of war and disturbance will ever cease to operate'.<sup>463</sup>

While conservatives emphasised the suffering inherent in war, they did not morally condemn the use of force in international affairs. War was to be regretted, but it was not the case that justice demanded, say, returning to the status quo *ante*. A military victory could even confer rights and claims on a country. Cowell noted with equanimity 'the redistribution of territory, which is sure to follow in the wake of a considerable war'.<sup>464</sup>

Moreover, conservatives thought that the actual use of force had a distinct and important role in international politics. Only military conflict could settle those disputes over interests which proved intractable for diplomacy, even if it also involved a much higher cost.<sup>465</sup> As the war unfolded, at one point the demands of one country would line up with what another was willing to concede – both likely subject to change as the war progressed – and a settlement would finally be possible.<sup>466</sup> Wilson complimented Bismarck on properly apprehending this dynamic, stating that 'it may be regarded as due to that daring Minister's temper and character that the situation, when it had become strained beyond pacific arbitrament, was at once seen and accepted, and the quarrel was fought out'.<sup>467</sup>

Gladstone also thought that through war 'the views of the respective parties would be brought, by the force of circumstances, within measurable distance'.<sup>468</sup> Two important differences, however, were that for Gladstone, this did not make war a worthwhile means of dispute settlement – this convergence of views was a neutral characteristic of war, rather than its main function. Secondly, for Gladstone, convergence was not an amoral process, but took place against a backdrop of objective

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<sup>461</sup> Hamley (1877b: 113).

<sup>462</sup> Hamley (1878c: 353).

<sup>463</sup> Burrows (1877: 529)

<sup>464</sup> Cowell (1878j: 499; see also (1877d: 511; 1878e: 648); 1877h: 612).

<sup>465</sup> Cecil (1870: 546-7, 551); Cowell (1876c: 461-2); Dasent (1870: 301-2); Patterson (1864a: 110, 118, 122); Wilson (1871a: 82).

<sup>466</sup> Burrows (1877: 542-3); Cowell (1876b: 256); (1877c: 361); (1877e: 637-8); (1878g: 123).

<sup>467</sup> Wilson (1871a: 80), commenting on Prussia's war with Austria in 1866.

ethics – there were right and wrong places for perspectives to converge.<sup>469</sup>

Conservatives thought that statesmen could reasonably choose to go to war, if only as a means of last resort.<sup>470</sup> They considered threats to a great power's crucial interests or stature as sufficient reason to use force, reflected in the general assumption that a war would spread as other states' interests became involved.<sup>471</sup> Conservative commentators characterised the Crimean War as such: unfortunate but necessary. At stake in the Crimean War, conservatives argued, was the ability of Russia to make a bid for hegemony over Europe.<sup>472</sup> This threat to the balance of power justified, even compelled, Britain and France to confront Russia with military force. War, Swayne stated, 'is a necessity inseparable from our earthly condition. As such, we must accept it as men, and be ready, at all times, to bear our part in it manfully'.<sup>473</sup>

Conservatives thus thought of war as a means to a particular end. War was a particular modulation in international politics, rather than an existential struggle: the stakes of a conflict were not absolute. 'Should war come, it will be closed by compromises', Patterson declared in 1864.<sup>474</sup> Neither the basic character of a conflict nor its moral import changed when a dispute was resolved through war rather than diplomacy – through the actual use of force rather than its veiled insinuation. The settlement agreed on in ending a war, conservatives considered as valid as those arrived at through diplomacy. A war, however, which would not in fact lead to a resolution of the dispute at hand had no redeeming value whatsoever – regardless of any noble ideals entertained by one side or the other.<sup>475</sup>

### The necessity of having a military well-prepared for war

Conservative commentators stressed the importance of Britain having a military which

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<sup>468</sup> Gladstone (1870: 581).

<sup>469</sup> See also the discussion of conservative and liberal perspectives on the peace terms of the Franco-Prussian war, in the previous chapter.

<sup>470</sup> This belief in the general inexpediency of war only pertained to the European sphere, though. Outside of Europe, where wars were less costly (for Britain), there was a lower threshold for the use of force. See e.g. Hamley (1871a: 243).

<sup>471</sup> Cecil (1871: 282-3); Lever (1870c: 510); Swayne (1867: 195); Patterson (1864a: 114, 116); (1864c: 253-4).

<sup>472</sup> Disraeli (1855: 1737-8); Elwin (1854: 298-9); E.B. Hamley (1855c: 353); (1855i: 261); (1856a: 241); Hardman (1858: 85); Libri and Guizot (1855: 494, 499-500); Patterson (1855c: 634-5, 637, 643-4); (1856a: 611); Swayne (1854a: 592); (1855c: 335).

<sup>473</sup> Swayne (1854b: 718). See also Cowell (1876b: 252); Gleig (1855: 379); E.B. Hamley (1856a: 241); W. Hamley (1877a: 767); Patterson (1856a: 613); Swayne (1854a: 593).

<sup>474</sup> Patterson (1864a: 111). See also Gleig (1870b: 662); Patterson (1864a: 121); (1864c: 253-4); Wilson (1870: 382).

<sup>475</sup> Cowell (1877c: 370-1; 1877h: 615); Craik (1877: 583); Hamley (1877f: 653-4). See also the discussion of the American Civil War in Chapter 2, Part III.

was well-prepared for war. The quality of Britain's military was an issue which galvanised conservative commentators, not least the significant minority who were military officers themselves. Only if Britain were to invest the money and energy necessary for a well-functioning military would it be secure, at peace, and enjoy the influence proper for one of the great powers of Europe. *The Standard* for instance felt comfortable asserting, during the Black Sea affair of 1870-71, that 'a weak army means a timid and undignified policy in foreign affairs'.<sup>476</sup>

Here, conservatives argued, the policy preferences of liberals and radicals had a pernicious effect. The latter enthusiastically fostered the prosperity of Britain, but, instead of spending some of this wealth on the military, liberals favoured a policy of so-called economy, which involved cutting funding to the military until its existence as an effective force was all but destroyed. Mere prosperity was no source of strength, however; '[the] power of England is nothing better than a name', Elwin warned, 'unless it is brought to bear upon the scene of action'.<sup>477</sup> In this way, conservatives argued, one of the basic tenets of liberal government worked to sap the strength of Britain and to undermine its influence in international affairs.<sup>478</sup> As Gleig asserted, 'an army we must have, and are quite ready to pay for it'.<sup>479</sup>

The necessity of military preparedness was the main lesson which conservative commentators drew from the Crimean War and the Franco-Prussian war. In the debates on both events conservative commentators argued that a military well-prepared for war was necessary for security, international influence, and peacefulness in Britain's foreign affairs.<sup>480</sup>

To be secure, conservatives argued, Britain needed a well-funded army, as well as navy. Its isolation from the continent gave Britain some respite — given the Channel and its navy, Britain needed its army to be merely adequate, rather than fully the equal of the Continental powers, for the country to be safe.<sup>481</sup> Britain could no longer wait,

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<sup>476</sup> *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 11, p. 4). See also *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 23, p. 4); W.G. Hamley (1870c: 789); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 28, p. 4); (Dec. 19, p. 4).

<sup>477</sup> Elwin (1854: 288). See also Alison (1855: 126); Gleig (1855: 394); E.B. Hamley (1855i: 260-1); Patterson (1856a: 609-10, 618-20); Swayne (1855c: 347); (1856: 388-9, 403).

<sup>478</sup> *The Globe* (1870: Nov. 23); W.G. Hamley (1870c: 789-90); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 11, p. 4); (Nov. 28, p. 4); (Dec. 9, p. 4).

<sup>479</sup> Gleig (1871: 130); see also Cecil (1871: 272-4); Chesney (1871); (Gleig (1866: 657).

<sup>480</sup> See also Chapter 2 Part II, section 'The failure of British statesmanship', for the domestic side of this conservative critique.

<sup>481</sup> See e.g. Gleig (1871: 118-119). Their focus on preparedness led most conservative commentators to prefer a professional standing army over a militia or volunteer force (a favourite of republican liberals), which were useful merely to the extent that they could be made to approximate professional soldiers. Cecil (1871: 285); Dasent (1870: 317-8); Gleig (1870a: 646); (1870b: 659); (1871: 127, 129); Hamley (1870b: 528-9); (1871c: 491-3); Wilson (1870: 391). See also Parry (2006: 279-286).

however, until war had started to prepare for hostilities. Military preparedness went against British custom, but had become necessary due to the changed character of war. The development of technologies, in particular those relating to transport – railroads and steamships – and communications – the telegraph – had made war a speedier affair.<sup>482</sup> Any initial advantage was likely to translate into eventual victory.<sup>483</sup> This, conservatives argued, made being prepared for conflict essential to the safety of any country. With 'the progress of mechanical science', noted Cecil, 'a nation must not only be strong – it must be ready', or in Hamley's phrase, 'must hold itself in every respect prepared for war'.<sup>484</sup>

Home defence, however, was not the only role which conservatives envisaged for the military. An army capable of sustaining a campaign abroad was necessary, they argued, for a state to be considered a great power.<sup>485</sup> Cecil despaired 'of how low the influence of England has fallen ... [with] an army which is too weak to fight any civilised nation except under the wing of a military ally'.<sup>486</sup> Conservatives considered an army of equal quality, if not necessarily quantity, to the other great powers a necessity for Britain's wishes and actions to be acknowledged by other states: 'we must be able,' Cecil argued, 'in case of need, to operate upon the Continent with armies having some proportion to those with which modern warfare is carried on'.<sup>487</sup>

Thirdly, conservatives argued that a prepared military was a requirement for peaceful foreign relations. Possessing the means to go to war, they thought, was the best means to avoid having to go to war. They admitted that, in the Crimean War, Britain had been able to preserve the balance of power in the end; but it had had to engage in costly warfare to do so, because Russia had had the impression that Britain was not able and willing to stop her. 'The reputation for military power', Beresford Hope stated, 'is a security for peace'.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> Chesney (1867: 70); Dasent (1870: 304, 308); Gleig (1870b: 669); (1871: 127); Hamley, E.B. (1866: 250, 256-8); Hamley (1870c: 775); (1871c: 497); Lever (1871d: 369).

<sup>483</sup> Chesney (1867: 68); Hamley, E.B. (1866: 248, 256-8); Hamley (1870c: 786); (1871c: 497).

<sup>484</sup> Cecil (1871: 274) and Hamley (1871b: 382). See also Cecil (1871: 269-270); Chesney (1867: 82); (1871); Gleig (1866: 649). Gladstone rejected this argument for increased funding for the army; Britain's 'consummate means of naval defence, combined with our position as islands ... combines to make us safe' (1870: 590; see also 589-91).

<sup>485</sup> Alison (1855: 125); Cecil (1871: 284-5); Disraeli (1855: 1740-1); Elwin (1854: 288, 293, 295, 298-9); Gleig (1855: 379); C. Hamley (1855b: 144); E.B. Hamley (1855j: 520); Lever (1871c: 174); Patterson (1856a: 621); (1856b: 726-30, 737).

<sup>486</sup> Cecil (1870: 540).

<sup>487</sup> Cecil (1871: 284); see also Gleig (1871: 130).

<sup>488</sup> Beresford Hope (1855: 27). See also Alison (1855: 126, 135); Hamley (1870c: 790); (1871c: 501); Hamley and Burgoyne (1856: 487); Lytton (1855: 1385-6); Swayne (1855a: 111); (1856: 388-9, 403); Wilson (1871b: 361).

If Britain lacked a prepared military, it would be burdened with a frazzled diplomacy which tried to keep one potential crisis after another from spinning out of control, as various states tested the resilience of a Britain which seemed ill-prepared for conflict. If Britain funded a well-prepared military, then it would be respected and there would consequently be a stability and order to her foreign policy. If other states perceived that Britain could quickly best them in a conflict, they would take far more care not to provoke her in the first place.<sup>489</sup> 'The way to assure peace was not just to 'refrain from molesting others; it is necessary also that we possess the means of preventing them from molesting us'.<sup>490</sup> '[To] be ready for war', Hamley concluded, 'is often the best means of averting it'.<sup>491</sup>

Conservatives remarked that this contrasted with the perspective held by Gladstone and other liberals, who thought the exact opposite. As Hamley characterised their thoughts: 'Wars and quarrels, they said, arise ... above all, from the knowledge that we possess the means of going to war.'<sup>492</sup> Gladstone indeed wrote that 'military preparations [were] not made without the intent of turning them to account'.<sup>493</sup> For him, a well-prepared military, rather than ensuring peace and enabling an effective foreign policy, was merely a spur to war. Lever, representative of the conservative reaction to this line of reasoning, asserted that it was 'ridiculous ... to claim our immunity from danger on the score of our inability to resist it'.<sup>494</sup>

### **Cooperation among great powers**

Conservatives thought cooperation between states played a central role in European politics, in two related ways. Firstly, during the 1850s and 1860s they argued that a coalition of states was needed to uphold the Treaty of Vienna and its settlement of Europe, which they saw as in danger of unravelling.<sup>495</sup> Secondly, and more generally, they stressed that states needed to establish alliances and coalitions in order to achieve their objectives in international politics. For conservatives cooperation between states was intimately connected to the primacy of interests and of force.

The primacy of force was the main reason for states to cooperate. Being in the

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<sup>489</sup> Alison (1855: 123); E.B. Hamley (1856a: 241-2); Lytton (1855: 1379); Swayne (1855c: 347); (1856: 388-9, 403).

<sup>490</sup> Hamley (1871a: 246).

<sup>491</sup> Hamley (1877b: 114); see also Cowell (1878g: 120-1. 123); Craik (1878b: 287-8); Hamley (1878d: 495).

<sup>492</sup> Hamley (1871a: 243); see also Cecil (1871: 285); Lever (1871e: 445-6); Patterson (1864a: 110).

<sup>493</sup> Gladstone (1870: 554; see also 567-8).

<sup>494</sup> Lever (1871e: 446); see also Cecil (1871: 285).

<sup>495</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1859: 28); Patterson (1860: 101). See also Chapter 4.

right – for whatever sense of right – did not lead to acquiescence and to one's position winning the day; having a second great power at one's side, and with that the potential to bring to bear overwhelming force, was what led to the other party in a dispute to adopt one's perspective on affairs. Moreover, cooperating states could assert their interests in disputes over which they would otherwise have had no influence. A concert of all great powers or all minus one was one particularly potent form of cooperation, sure to dictate the terms of a settlement.<sup>496</sup> The utility of allies cropped up throughout conservatives' analysis of the events surrounding, for instance, the unification of Italy.<sup>497</sup> Britain, conservatives thought, ought not to need allies to have influence abroad, sometimes inevitably did require them, and could always make use of them, in war and in diplomatic entreaty.<sup>498</sup>

States cooperated not because of similar ideological preferences, or because they shared a same character of government, but because they had compatible interests in the affair.<sup>499</sup> For instance, the 'military alliance' between Austria and Prussia in 1864 was based purely on self-interest, Oliphant argued, where the allies did 'not from any tenderer feeling than an instinct of self-preservation ... join in a cordial embrace'.<sup>500</sup> States could also engage in reciprocal cooperation, over time. One state would support the other state's policy regarding a dispute in return for similar support from the other state later on.<sup>501</sup>

Such alliances were still circumscribed affairs, though. This was no solid bond of mutual defence and aid. Allies temporarily traded favours, allowing them each to secure an interest of theirs, but when their mutual usefulness was gone, then so was the alliance. For example, in 1859 Cecil reminded his readers that the established alliance between Prussia and Britain could only be preserved if Britain made itself of use to Prussia: 'if we do not help our allies, our allies will not help us'.<sup>502</sup> The viability of

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<sup>496</sup> For conservatives on the Concert as great powers with a common interest, see e.g. Gleig (1866: 648); Hamley (1871a: 244); Lever (1871e: 445-6). For Gladstone's idiosyncratic morally charged understanding of the Concert see Parry (2006: 254).

<sup>497</sup> Aytoun (1860: 247, 253); Cecil (1859: 23-24); (1862: 207, 212); Forsyth (1861: 170); Hardman (1859: 617); Lever (1863b: 655); Malmesbury quoted in Hicks (2007: 236); Oliphant (1860a: 357); (1860c: 734); Patterson (1859a: 376-7, 384); (1859b: 385, 389); (1860: 12, 34, 48-51, 103, 149); (1862c: 517-8, 526); Swayne (1859: 757); Tremenhoe (1859: 264-5).

<sup>498</sup> Cecil (1864a: 285-6); (1870: 541); Gleig (1866: 647, 649); Lever (1870b: 600-1); Patterson (1864a: 112, 114); (1864b: 644); (1864c: 253-4); Swayne (1867: 195); Wilson (1870: 380).

<sup>499</sup> Cecil (1862: 211-2, 215-7); Lever (1863c: 56-7); Oliphant (1860a: 357); (1860b: 649); Patterson (1859a: 387); (1860: 119-23, 140-8); (1862a: 337); (1862b: 512, 517-8); Tremenhoe and Portland (1865: 395-6).

<sup>500</sup> Oliphant (1864b: 516); see also (1865: 123).

<sup>501</sup> Cecil (1871: 282-3); Gleig (1870a: 648); Oliphant (1864a: 384); (1864b: 518); (1865: 119, 126); Patterson (1864a: 113); (1864b: 644-6); (1864c: 254).

<sup>502</sup> Cecil (1859: 25-30).

alliances also depended on which issues were current in international politics. France and Russia might have had some sort of an alliance before the Polish question, Patterson argued in 1864, but this understanding would have dissolved into enmity the moment the Eastern Question inevitably resurfaced.<sup>503</sup>

Alliances demanded skill and attention from diplomats and statesmen. Because the trade of favours was reciprocal, happened over time rather than in a moment, statesmen needed to inspire a degree of trust among their counterparts. Conservatives consequently argued that skilled statesmen could have great influence on the course of international politics, as they sabotaged the relations between other states while managing to gain the confidence of potential allies.<sup>504</sup> In 1859, during the crisis around the unification of Italy, Cecil put forward Napoleon III as such a statesman, thanks to the French Emperor's having managed to wreck the alliances between Britain and the continental powers which sustained the Vienna settlement, while himself fashioning alliances of convenience for each of his initiatives, sustained only as long as he gained advantage from them.<sup>505</sup>

Liberal thought on the basis of cooperation between states was different; most of them thought ideas and values played a major role.<sup>506</sup> States would cooperate, Gladstone for instance argued in 1870, not out of any particular self-regarding motivation, but in order to keep the peace or to support the side on which stood absolute right.<sup>507</sup> An alliance, he thought, was based not so much in the mutual relations of the *statesmen* of both countries, but in a similar sense of right and wrong among the *peoples* – 'sentiments in great part concurrent ... between two great nations' – and in the 'generous sympathy' to which this overlapping insight into the universal ethics would lead.<sup>508</sup> Conservatives were dismissive of this liberal perspective, arguing that it did not manage to explain the *de facto* course of international politics and the alignments of powers by which it was produced.<sup>509</sup>

Their discussion of the Crimean War peace negotiations provides a good case study of how conservatives viewed the role of alliance politics and great power

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<sup>503</sup> Patterson (1864a: 114); see also Oliphant (1865: 119, 125-6).

<sup>504</sup> See e.g. Gleig (1870a: 648-9); Lever (1870b: 601-2); Patterson (1864b: 640); Wilson (1871b: 366) on Bismarck.

<sup>505</sup> Cecil (1859: 25-30). See for a similar assessment Patterson (1859a: 382, 385); (1860: 48-51, 103).

<sup>506</sup> See e.g. Gladstone (1860: 103). See also Parry (2006: 221, 228, 230-1); Schreuder (1970: 488-90).

<sup>507</sup> See e.g. Gladstone (1870: 568).

<sup>508</sup> Gladstone (1870: 574-5).

<sup>509</sup> Cecil (1862: 211-2, 215-7); Lever (1863c: 56-7); Oliphant (1860a: 357); (1860b: 649); Patterson (1859a: 387); (1860: 14-15, 48-51, 119-23, 140-8); (1862a: 337); (1862b: 512, 517-8); Tremenheere and Portland (1865: 395-6). See also part III of Chapter 2, on conservative criticism of the liberals' moral lens.

diplomacy in arriving at a settlement in international relations.<sup>510</sup> Patterson extensively analysed the alliance politics and negotiations of the Crimean War, and these analyses were based wholly, and very explicitly, on the notion that a state's international position was unrelated to matters of ideology and merely a function of its interests involved in an affair.<sup>511</sup> Despite this primacy of self-interest, conservatives still argued for the value for Britain of cultivating coalitions with other states. It was because Britain could arraign a coalition of states against Russia that it was able to secure those interests threatened by Russian expansion at acceptable cost. For instance, involving Austria in the negotiations added an additional interested party, whose machinations steered the peace terms away from Britain's particular concerns. These concessions did, however, gain Britain the threat of Austrian participation in the war against Russia. Russia would then face overwhelming force and quickly consent to the necessary guarantees against future aggression.<sup>512</sup>

The Anglo-French alliance, conservatives thought, existed in tandem with a sustained mutual perception of the alliance partner as a likely future antagonist. France and Britain both hoped to realise peace terms which would not only secure their shared interest in checking Russian aggression, but would also complicate and constrain the foreign policy of their alliance partner in the future. While Britain would have gained by continuing the war for another year, not least by having the opportunity to destroy Russia's Baltic Sea fleet, most conservative commentators resignedly observed that if Britain continued the war, France would dissolve the alliance and sue for peace. The destruction of Russia's Baltic fleet, after all, was valuable to Britain in that it obviated the possibility of a French-Russian naval alliance and confirmed British hegemony over the oceans. In addition, the territorial settlement which would be enshrined in an immediate armistice would direct Russian expansion towards Asia, where it hurt only the British and not the French. France would thus act on its interests, conservatives stated, and would conclude a peace with Russia before Britain had a chance to gain her ends.<sup>513</sup> 'There is nothing more unstable', Patterson remarked, 'than foreign alliances'.<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> Conservatives would again explain states' patterns of cooperation by invoking the interests involved during the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78. See Cowell (1876a: 83); (1876b: 247, 250); Craik (1878a: 271); Hamley (1877a: 752); Kinglake and Austin (1880: 526-7); Smith and Layard (1877: 296, 314-7).

<sup>511</sup> Patterson (1855b: 236-8, 243); (1856a: 610-12, 614, 616-7); (1856b: 730, 732-3). *Pace* his earlier Patterson (1855a: 107-8). See also Aytoun (1855: 16); Hamley and Burgoyne (1856: 486); Libri and Guizot (1855: 494).

<sup>512</sup> Aytoun (1854: 611-5); Beresford Hope (1855: 26); Elwin (1854: 295, 299-2); E.B. Hamley (1855i: 259); (1856a: 241); Hamley and Burgoyne (1856: 490); Lytton (1855: 1387-8); Patterson (1855b: 238, 243); (1855c: 631); (1856a: 613, 615-7).

<sup>513</sup> E.B. Hamley (1856a: 240-1); Oliphant (1856: 483); Patterson (1855a: 115); (1856a: 611, 617, 623);



The self-interest of states informed their positions in international relations, and an alliance between states was not so much an island in these choppy waters, as a raft at the mercy of its shifting currents.

### **Honour and international relations**

In debates on British foreign policy, conservatives often invoked the honour of Britain as a call to action. Connotations surrounding the notion of honour can, however, give the wrong impression of the meaning of this move. For these conservatives, securing Britain's honour was not merely about maintaining a general sense of self-importance; it involved detailed aspects of the way in which a state was to interact with its peers. A state's honour was, for conservatives, exactly not a nebulous concept, a mere rhetorical device, but in fact closely entwined in the basic dynamics of international politics. When conservatives talked about a state's honour in this sense they meant that the state had good stature amongst the countries of Europe. In the most ethically charged interpretation, this meant that an honourable state had a reputation for keeping its promises and respecting its treaties. The notion generally had a wider meaning, though, of which this particular ethical inflection was merely a part. A country with honour had the reputation that it followed through on its diplomatic statements with the corresponding acts. In particular, such a country would act, if necessary through the use of military force, if any of its declared interests were infringed by another state.<sup>515</sup>

The need for a country to maintain its stature had broad implications for the way in which statesmen were to comport themselves in international affairs. How Britain handled any major affair in international politics would influence its general reputation, would reflect on its honour. 'The prestige of a nation', Craik and Smith asserted in 1877, 'means the world's estimate of its character and its power, on which depends its influence'.<sup>516</sup> Conservatives considered stature so important because they saw it influencing the conduct of the statesmen of other nations. If a state had a reputation for acting to secure its interests, then other countries would think twice before infringing on that state's interests.<sup>517</sup>

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(1856b: 731); Swayne (1856: 388).

<sup>514</sup> Patterson (1856b: 734).

<sup>515</sup> See e.g. *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 24, p. 4).

<sup>516</sup> Craik and Smith (1877: 307). This contrasts with the opinion of Gladstone, for whom Britain's international reputation was important too, but who connected this reputation with Britain's moral authority (Gladstone 1879).

<sup>517</sup> Cecil (1864a: 285-6); (1864b: 524); Gleig (1866: 649); Hamley (1870c: 790); (1871c: 501); Oliphant (1864a: 394); Patterson (1864b: 638, 640-1).

Gladstone saw the conservatives' version of stature, which he termed prestige, as a temporary substitute for strength, based on bluster and intimidation – a bullying approach to foreign governments based in arrogance and vanity.<sup>518</sup> Conservatives, however, did not think of stature as a means to attempt influence when strength was lacking. Quite the opposite: they considered stature to be the recognition of strength, of the actual ability and willingness of a state to use force to gain its ends. Whereas Gladstone thought prestige superfluous, given strength, and dangerous either way, conservatives thought that, without stature, strength had no influence on international affairs until the moment of military conflict. If a state lacked stature, its power would not help it to secure its interests or avert aggression.

Britain's problem, some conservative commentators noted, was that it valued its stature, but then conceptually separated it from its military power, and neglected the latter. Britain had long enjoyed an excellent reputation as a result of its glorious performance in the Napoleonic wars. 'But', Elwin warned already at the time of the Crimean War, 'the power of England is nothing better than a name unless it is brought to bear upon the scene of action'.<sup>519</sup> Britain could not coast along on the strength of this prestige forever. Sooner or later some major power would not be daunted by it, infringe British interests anyway, and Britain, without a proper military, would see both its interests compromised and its stature in tatters. At the time of the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78, conservatives still complained that Britain was extremely hesitant to threaten and deploy the use of force, and as a result 'our European prestige has suffered'.<sup>520</sup> A state's stature might be the result of its past performance, not its present power, but, conservatives argued, any statesman with foresight, taking the long-term view, would acknowledge that a state's stature rested on its military strength.

The relative prominence of notions of honour in conservative international thought is best illustrated by the debates surrounding the Black Sea affair of 1870-71. Britain experienced a brief war-scare over the second half of November 1870, after Russia declared that it would no longer respect the neutralisation of the Black Sea. This neutrality was to Britain the most important clause of the Treaty of Paris of 1856, which had ended the Crimean War. There was a brief but heated debate carried on in the leaders of and letters to the daily newspapers, in which authors argued how Britain

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<sup>518</sup> Parry (2006: 255).

<sup>519</sup> Elwin (1854: 288). See also Alison (1855: 126); E.B. Hamley (1855j: 520); Swayne (1854a: 597); (1855c: 347); (1856: 389).

<sup>520</sup> Northcote (1877: 68).

ought to react and whether the issue was worth waging a war over.

In these contributions liberals and conservatives generally laid a different emphasis. The most prominent radical and liberal contributors to the debate were focused on the nature of treaty obligations and their connection to international morality.<sup>521</sup> Conservative commentators, in contrast, primarily perceived this affair as a threat to Britain's honour.<sup>522</sup> They thought that the unilateral repudiation of the Treaty by Russia, wholly ignoring the interests of Britain, was a clear insult, and they agonised that Gladstone's government might fail to meet this challenge. If Britain did not act forcefully to oppose Russia, conservatives argued, it would confirm to all the states of Europe that Britain's preferences could be blithely ignored. Britain would gain the reputation of not acting to secure any interests under peril – Britain would lose its honour.<sup>523</sup>

Close to the resolution of the affair honour was still foremost in these commentators' minds. By the end of November, it seemed likely that the issue would be resolved through a conference of great powers, in which Britain would have to compromise its interests, in relinquishing Black Sea neutrality, while retaining its honour, through Russia's recognition of the treaty system in general and Britain's concerns in particular. Most conservative commentators now agreed that this was the best possible outcome. With Britain's honour satisfied, these conservatives acknowledged, retaining the Black Sea's neutrality would not be worth a major war.<sup>524</sup>

In the Black Sea affair, as in many others, conservatives laid more stress on the potential consequences to Britain's honour than to its particular interests.<sup>525</sup> If Britain's honour was allowed to be impugned in a significant way, then the consequences would reverberate throughout its foreign affairs; Britain would '[cease] to be consulted in any great European question', while other states would go from respecting its interests to infringing them at will.<sup>526</sup> In contrast, if Britain maintained its honour and cultivated a reputation for acting decisively whenever its interests were meddled with, then states

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<sup>521</sup> See e.g. Mill (1870a); (1870b); (1870c). Varouxakis (2013a: 44-76) analyses Mill's writings on treaties and the contemporary reactions to these letters and articles.

<sup>522</sup> Dalrymple (1871: 963-4); *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 19, p. 4); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 16, p. 4); (Nov. 17, p. 4); (Nov. 18, p. 4); (Nov. 21, p. 4); (Nov. 24, p. 4); (Nov. 26, p. 4); (Nov. 30, p. 4).

<sup>523</sup> Dalrymple (1871: 964); W.G. Hamley (1871a: 244); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 16, p. 4); (Nov. 21, p. 4); (Nov. 26, p. 4); (Nov. 28, p. 4); (Nov. 29, p. 4); (Nov. 30, p. 4).

<sup>524</sup> Fowler (1871: 930); *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 28, p. 4); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 18, p. 4); (Nov. 29, p. 4); (Nov. 30, p. 4); (Dec. 1, p. 4). See also the contrast with the perspective of "hard-headed" liberals on this matter, Chapter 6.

<sup>525</sup> Dalrymple (1871: 965); *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 15, p. 4); (Nov. 19, p. 4); Mannors (1871: 952); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 23, p. 4); (Nov. 24, p. 4).

<sup>526</sup> *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 15, p. 4).

would tread gingerly around Britain, thus lessening the chance of any dispute dissolving into war.

### **Assertive diplomacy and clear signalling as proper statesmanship**

Given the primacy of interests and force, and the importance of stature, conservatives argued that proper statesmanship combined an assertive diplomacy with a clear signalling of intent to other states. 'Thereby, statesmen would secure the interests of Britain without necessitating the actual use of force, and preserve Europe's peace and order by preventing aggressive attitudes from arising abroad. 'What Britain has to say upon any great question', Aytoun stated, 'should be conveyed in language brief, emphatic, and unmistakable'.<sup>527</sup> Since, conservatives thought, the potential use of force was the main influence on a statesman's calculations, words were only relevant in international politics as signals of the possible use of force.<sup>528</sup> An assertive diplomacy, for conservatives, meant a clear signalling of the country's threshold for the use of force in defence of its interests and stature.<sup>529</sup>

Conservatives thought that Britain ought always to be actively engaged with international affairs, even when it was not to involve itself in a conflict directly. For instance, during the Franco-Prussian war, Britain ought to clarify to other states that it valued the independence of Belgium and that it was willing to use force to secure this interest. An assertive foreign policy was necessary, Cecil stated, for Britain 'to be looked upon as a European Power'.<sup>530</sup> Britain, Hamley stated, 'cannot stand aloof from the rubs and trials of the times ... and to be exempt from the disagreeable concerns of the world ... [rather] we shall have to ... behave like men, or else surrender empire, wealth, and station'.<sup>531</sup>

Conservatives asserted that far from being bellicose, a clear threat to use force was the best way to ensure peace. If, in a dispute, a state's diplomacy were characterised by 'timidity and vacillation', if it merely conveyed 'faint dissuasion', the state addressed would assume these words would not be matched with forceful acts.<sup>532</sup> The aggressor

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<sup>527</sup> Aytoun (1854: 599).

<sup>528</sup> Cecil (1864a: 284-5); (1864b: 481-2); Gleig (1866: 642, 648-50); *The Globe* (1870, Nov 29, p. 4); Hamley (1870c: 790); (1871c: 501); Manners (1871: 947-8); Oliphant (1865: 121); Patterson (1864b: 641); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 23, p. 4); (Nov. 25, p. 4); (Dec. 14, p. 4); (Dec. 19, p. 4); Wilson (1871b: 366).

<sup>529</sup> See e.g. Aytoun (1860: 246); Cecil (1862: 212); Oliphant (1860c: 735).

<sup>530</sup> Cecil (1871: 282).

<sup>531</sup> Hamley (1870c: 786-7); see also Cecil (1870: 556); (1871: 281-2); Dasent (1870: 314); Gleig (1866: 642); (1870a: 656); Hamley (1871c: 501, 506); Oliphant (1864a: 386, 395); (1864b: 518); (1865: 118); Patterson (1864a: 112); (1864c: 243).

<sup>532</sup> Patterson (1855b: 231) and Aytoun (1854: 599). See also e.g. Hamley (1870b: 513); (1870c: 781); Lever

would persist in its policy and unwittingly demand too large a compromise, under the impression that it would be granted, thereby eliciting war. If, instead, the statesmen of a great power were assertive and clearly signalled their willingness to go to war over certain well-defined interests, then other statesmen – when not compelled to pander to some popular passion – would refrain from infringing on these interests and the countries would avoid war.<sup>533</sup> Statesmen consequently needed to be 'firm and manly' in their conduct.<sup>534</sup>

Conservatives argued from this perspective during the Black Sea affair of November 1870. They asserted that if war were to break out between Russia and the Ottomans, Britain would sooner or later get involved on the side of 'Turkey'.<sup>535</sup> The choice, they stated, became simple. Fight a war immediately to reassert the neutrality of the Black Sea, while Russia was still unprepared and a naval campaign would suffice; or let Russia rearm and prepare, and fight the conflict at a moment of its choosing, leading to a full-blown land war. 'Yielding now', *The Globe* argued, 'will cause a worse war at no distant date'; immediate forceful action on the part of Britain was plainly the better option.<sup>536</sup> Moreover, the mere clear commitment to war would likely lead Russia to recant its abrogation. Had Russia not already, *The Standard* noted on November 21<sup>st</sup>, indicated its willingness to discuss the matter in a conference, merely after Granville's assertive dispatches? If Britain were only to commit itself unambiguously to war over the neutrality of the Black Sea, then it would, conservatives argued, in fact preserve both the peace and the material guarantees for future peace, with British honour intact.<sup>537</sup> Britain could vacillate and end up with both its reputation in tatters and a certain costly war in the future, or it could act decisively right away and thereby both preserve its stature and either have an easier war, or avoid war altogether.

During the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78 conservatives again argued that the best way to avoid a war with Russia over the Straits and Constantinople would be to signal clearly to Russia that Britain would in fact go to war over its interests in the Straits. Pacifism was not a sustainable policy: 'a time may come when compliance must

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(1871c: 233).

<sup>533</sup> Aytoun (1854: 599-600, 604-5, 617-8); Cecil (1864b: 517-8); Lever (1871a: 233); Oliphant (1864a: 384, 394); Patterson (1855a: 107-8); (1864b: 641-2); (1864c: 244); Swayne (1854a: 591, 597); Wilson (1871b: 366).

<sup>534</sup> Oliphant (1856: 474). See also Alison (1855: 126, 135); Aytoun (1854: 604-5, 617); Elwin (1854: 279); E.B. Hamley (1855i: 260); Patterson (1855a: 99); (1855c: 633-4).

<sup>535</sup> *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 17, p. 4); (Nov. 19, p. 4); Manners (1871: 952); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 15, p. 4); (Nov. 19, p. 4); (Nov. 24, p. 4); (Nov. 28, p. 4).

<sup>536</sup> *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 19, p. 4). See also *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 24, p. 4).

<sup>537</sup> *The Globe* (1870: Nov. 19, p. 4); W.G. Hamley (1870c: 789); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 16, p. 4); (Nov.

cease'.<sup>538</sup> And if this were the case, 'can collision best be avoided by loudly proclaimed indifference and an ostentatious refusal to prepare, or by timely resolution, and unconcealed, but still pacific, vigilance?'.<sup>539</sup> Britain ought to indicate clearly under which conditions it would shed its neutrality, so as to avoid on the side of Russia 'delusive hope – that most certain of all incentives to war'.<sup>540</sup>

Conservatives argued in favour of an assertive diplomacy and of clear signalling not only because these worked to secure Britain's interests without Britain having to use military force, but also because these worked to prevent states from taking an aggressive attitude and ultimately making a bid for hegemony. Statesmen could be convinced of the costs of an aggressive course of action through the right signals from other governments, which were to 'provide the greatest inducement for choosing the higher path'.<sup>541</sup> Here conservatives assumed that the raw power to oppose the country in question could in theory be collected. The crux lay in convincing the statesmen in question that the will and the ability to wield this power against a particular scheme of conquest were present, as well.<sup>542</sup>

At different points during the 1850s, 60s, and 70s, conservative commentators argued that both France and Prussia were appropriate targets for such concerted signalling by the states of Europe in general, and Britain in particular. In the aftermath of the unification of Italy, conservatives thought that the rest of Europe could dissuade Napoleon III 'from foreign war by a stern European combination of well-armed nations'.<sup>543</sup> After the Franco-Prussian war, conservatives were particularly worried about Germany and the possible attitudes of its Prussian statesmen. The other great powers appeared as a negligible constraint, with France and Austria lacking strength and with Russia and Germany seemingly having reached some accord. Conservatives were convinced that only 'if we [Britain] make her [Prussia] understand that we are both able and willing to restrain her ambition', would the Prussian statesmen decide to fulfil their ambitions through peaceful means.<sup>544</sup> In the words of Hamley, English engagement and leadership could function as a 'surety for Germany', indicating the futility of schemes of

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18, p. 4); (Nov. 19, p. 4); (Nov. 21, p. 4); (Nov. 24, p. 4); (Dec. 19, p. 4).

<sup>538</sup> Craik (1878a: 273-4).

<sup>539</sup> Craik (1878a: 273-4); see also Cowell (1878g: 120-1, 123); Craik (1878b: 287-8); Hamley (1878d: 495).

<sup>540</sup> Craik (1878a: 273-4); see also Cowell (1876d: 643); Craik (1878b: 287-8); Hamley (1877b: 114-5); Shand (1878: 740).

<sup>541</sup> Hamley (1871a: 247-8); see also Patterson (1864b: 641).

<sup>542</sup> Hamley (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 495-6, 504).

<sup>543</sup> Swayne (1859: 757); see also Forsyth (1861: 142); Lever (1863c: 56-7, 64); Patterson (1862c: 512, 517-8).

<sup>544</sup> Gleig (1870b: 662); see also Cecil (1864a: 287); Wilson (1871a: 92).

conquest and guaranteeing that its statesmen would not take the military path to glory.<sup>545</sup>

In contrast, in 1870 Gladstone felt comfortable in rejecting the conservatives' concern over a possible bid for hegemony on the part of newly unified Germany. This was because, where conservatives saw only a role for other states' potential use of force and, in the domestic realm, the possible pressure to pander to the passions of the people, Gladstone added a third influence on statesmen: the influence of a universal ethics, 'that lofty influence belonging to that general and fixed opinion entertained by civilised man, which happily in our times no state or nation, however powerful, can disregard'.<sup>546</sup> As a consequence, Gladstone thought that, regardless of the attitude which the German people would take – Gladstone locating final agency in the nation rather than in the statesmen – 'it is idle to believe that they have before them a career of universal conquest or absolute predominance, and that the European family is not strong enough to correct the eccentricities of its peccant and obstreperous members'.<sup>547</sup> This strength which constrained and corrected was at least as much moral, in Gladstone's mind, as it was material. Conservatives trusted only to the constraint of material, military force, and were consequently rather more worried, both about Prussia's intentions and the Gladstone government's seemingly cavalier response. Only if British statesmen were assertive in their dealings with foreign powers, conservatives reiterated, and clearly signalled that Britain would react forcefully to any major project of aggression in Europe, could it remain at peace and preserve the European order.

### **A proper statesman: the conservative critique of liberal statesmen**

Conservatives argued that the dynamics of international relations demanded a policy of assertive engagement with the issues based on realistic assessments of the state of affairs, in which the statements of Britain would reliably indicate to what extent Britain would use force to uphold its interests.<sup>548</sup> The liberal statesmen of Britain, conservatives argued again and again, failed to live up to these standards of proper statesmanship.

The liberals' first major shortcoming in the eyes of conservatives was that they were overly fearful of war and were consequently not assertive enough. Conservatives acknowledged the worth of peace, but argued that liberals held 'an attitude indicating

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<sup>545</sup> Hamley (1871c: 506).

<sup>546</sup> Gladstone (1870: 587-8).

<sup>547</sup> Gladstone (1870: 588).

<sup>548</sup> See e.g. Aytoun (1860: 246); Cecil (1862: 212); Oliphant (1860c: 735).

not so much an honourable desire for peace as a craven dread of war'.<sup>549</sup> This attitude not only invited hostility, but it also led liberal statesmen to give unclear signals to other states, which made war even more likely. Their pacific policies and statements were 'means which must not only fail of their object, but which tend to bring about the very evils which they are intended to avert, while at the same time they render us incapable of repelling those evils'.<sup>550</sup>

During the Crimean War, conservatives argued that 'Gladstone and Cobden, Russell and Bright', all shared a flaw fatal to their statesmanship. Their attitude should have been one which put 'the honour of the country and the interests of Europe' first; instead, 'peace with Russia – peace at any price – was their sole desire'.<sup>551</sup> Indulging in their sentimental, emotional dislike of war, these politicians had all convinced themselves that war could be avoided if only Britain really wanted to do so. Conservatives asserted that if the Tsar had realised that Britain and France would together go to war over his course of action, he would have desisted. 'A decided attitude at the beginning', Aytoun lamented, 'might have saved us from all this bloodshed'.<sup>552</sup> The Peelite and Whig government failed, however, to be decisive and to signal clearly. This led the Tsar to think that Britain would merely protest, but not act. If only the Whig and Peelite statesmen had been willing to consider war a possible necessity in the first place and had honestly confronted the Tsar, these commentators assured their readers, the war would never have happened.

During the American Civil War, conservatives disapproved of the reaction of the Liberal government to the several disputes between Britain and the American North, and impugned the liberals in speculating as to their reasons for their course of action. Conservatives asserted that the North was unreasonable and hypocritical in its demands and presumptions; the correct British reaction would have been to rap the North on its knuckles, but the Liberal government instead assiduously complied with every request. The obliging reaction of the British liberal statesmen, conservatives argued, had encouraged the Northern statesmen in their overbearing demeanour.

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<sup>549</sup> Hamley (1871c: 504-5).

<sup>550</sup> Hamley (1871a: 245).

<sup>551</sup> Patterson (1855b: 238). See also Aytoun (1854: 603, 606); Elwin (1854: 277, 287-88); Gleig (1855: 378-9); E.B. Hamley (1855i: 261); Lytton (1855: 131386); Patterson (1855a: 98, 103-4, 106-7, 115); (1855b: 231-2, 238); (1855c: 633-5); Swayne (1854a: 597); (1854b: 730). This was no faithful representation of the different opinions present within the liberal field. See for instance Martin (1924: 128-9); Parry (2006: 213).

<sup>552</sup> Aytoun (1854: 604). See also Alison (1855: 126, 135); Aytoun (1854: 599-600, 603-6, 617-8); Derby (1854: 74); Disraeli (1855: 1723, 1740); Elwin (1854: 279); E.B. Hamley (1856a: 487); Hardwicke (1853: 1643); Pakington (1853: 1783); Patterson (1855a: 115); (1855c: 639); Swayne (1854a: 591). See also *The Morning Herald* (13 June 1854); (15 September 1853); *The Press* (28 May 1853); (4 June 1853). See further



Conservative commentators ascribed two different possible motivations for this putative liberal course of action. They firstly accused the liberals of timidity in their dealings with other states of reasonable power. This was a reiteration of a standing conservative critique of Palmerstonian foreign policy, which argued that Palmerston and the liberals were happy to bully small states over inconsequential matters, but were too self-effacing whenever another great power infringed on British interests, fearing any possible confrontation. Conservatives secondly suggested that liberals used the unreasonable demands made by the North as an excuse to favour the Northern cause, which represented the values they held dear. Liberals then privileged the North under the cover of being scrupulously neutral and peace-loving – and thus without having to justify their partiality to anyone.<sup>553</sup>

Conservatives complained that the liberals' course of action was damaging to the stature of Britain, as it gave the impression that Britain could 'be bullied with impunity'.<sup>554</sup> The British reaction to events such as the Trent affair ought not to revolve around abstract issues such as international law; rather, 'the national honour was at stake'.<sup>555</sup> 'To profess a disinclination to fight', Hamley lectured, 'is not the best way to deal with a bully'; instead, he commanded, 'leave no doubt possible that we are prepared to use our power for the assertion of our rights'.<sup>556</sup> Indeed, the Trent affair, Forsyth asserted, was a case in point; only after the Liberal government had felt compelled to order 'the despatch of large and formidable armaments' did the North heed British complaints.<sup>557</sup> The British government, they thought, should especially make it clear that Britain did not fear a war with the North. Conveying this impression was essential to maintaining the stature of Britain as a first-rate power, 'proud in its independence, sensitive for its honour, and able and willing to hold its own against all comers'.<sup>558</sup>

As Gladstone succeeded Palmerston as leader of the Liberal party, conservative commentators' criticism of liberal statesmanship became even more pronounced.

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Hicks (2007: 146-8).

<sup>553</sup> Cecil (1861: 248, 285-6); (1865: 250-1); Hamley (1862a: 129-30); (1862d: 373); (1863b: 644-6); (1864a: 447, 453, 458); Mackay (1866a: 31); Ross (1865b: 172); Wolseley (1863: 25-6). Apart from a subset of radicals, most liberals in fact did not like, let alone trust, the North, though they had a far stronger distaste for the South. See Harvie (1976: 105-7); Kent (1978: 24); Taylor (1957: 65).

<sup>554</sup> Cecil (1862: 568).

<sup>555</sup> Forsyth (1862: 274).

<sup>556</sup> Hamley (1862a: 120) and (1863b: 652); see also Beresford Hope (1862: 42); Hamley (1861a: 134); (1862b: 535); (1863a: 632); (1864a: 459); Ross (1865b: 154).

<sup>557</sup> Forsyth (1862: 274).

<sup>558</sup> Hamley (1863b: 636-7). See also Beresford Hope (1862: 43, 115-6); Cecil (1862: 535, 568, 570); (1865: 250-1); Clarendon cited in Crook (1974: 131); Forsyth (1862: 259); Hamley (1861a: 130); (1862a: 120, 130); (1863b: 636-9, 646-7, 651-2); (1864a: 458-9); Spence (1861: 304-5); (1862: 10-11); Wolseley (1863: 25).

Hamley summed up the Gladstonian liberals' policy stance, based on their convictions, as: evisceration of the military, saving precious money, and disengagement from Europe, in the sense that Britain was not to press its rights and opinions, except as a neutral arbiter. The idea behind these policies, Hamley noted, was that this 'unobtrusive amiability' would charm and impress other states, who would be won over to the same behaviour, 'and bring it [the whole world] step by step to the fullness of brotherly love'.<sup>559</sup> Conservatives argued that, on the contrary, adopting such a demeanour was all but asking other states to trample over Britain's interests, to the point where even Gladstone would feel forced to go to war to protect them.<sup>560</sup>

In light of remarks made by Gladstone and others, Hamley hastened to stress that having and showing military power did not automatically imply an aggressive attitude: '[t]here is a perfectly dignified and undemonstrative bearing which, though indicating conscious power, is most studious not to offend or provoke'.<sup>561</sup> Indeed, Hamley argued, having ample military power even made a peaceful attitude a more realistic possibility: '[i]nspire foreign Governments with the belief that you are able and ready to resist encroachment and to chastise impertinence, and then they will not misconstrue your motives when you show a preference for peace'.<sup>562</sup> The liberals' professed desire for peace, combined with an unprepared military and a lack of firm assertion regarding interests, would, conservatives thought, be interpreted by other statesmen as a signal of the state's weakness and would all but invite them to demand excessive concessions and compromises. Discussing both Russia's aggressive behaviour in revoking the Black Sea clauses and the possibility of Germany acquiring a taste for conquest, Hamley argued that '[i]f England were but ready now, she doubtless might obviate a fearful struggle, of which none can see the end. But just *because she is not ready*, just *because she has been telling barbarous Russia that she is not going to fight*, she will have to take up the wager of battle'.<sup>563</sup>

Gladstone's foreign policy was widely identified with an 'excessive pressure for retrenchment from a dominant commercial class' which had led to an 'unwillingness to pay for proper defence [which] was fatally counterproductive'.<sup>564</sup> There was a set of

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<sup>559</sup> Hamley (1871a: 243). Lever too argued explicitly against the world-view of Gladstone and his fellow liberals. See e.g. Lever (1871a: 236); (1871c: 173-4); (1871e: 445-6).

<sup>560</sup> Hamley (1871a: 240); (1871c: 173-4); (1871e: 445-6).

<sup>561</sup> Hamley (1871a: 246).

<sup>562</sup> Hamley (1871a: 246); see also Patterson (1864c: 244).

<sup>563</sup> Hamley (1870c: 789), my emphases. Hamley (1870c: 779); see also Cecil (1864a: 287); (1870: 556); (1871: 271, 285); Lever (1871a: 233); Oliphant (1864a: 386); Patterson (1864a: 113); (1864c: 244).

<sup>564</sup> Parry (2006: 286).

liberals who differed from the Gladstonian norm, and advocated a 'strong foreign or defence policy' instead of restraint and economy. They 'robustly opposed humanitarian sentimentalism', which Liberalism increasingly came to stand for.<sup>565</sup> These liberals, like conservatives, regarded an assertive foreign policy and effective army as crucial for Britain's position in the international arena. The aims and ends to be pursued from this position, however, they imagined differently, namely the realisation of liberal values by Britain. 'If England were humiliated abroad', these liberals thought, 'how could it preach its progressive gospel? If it were ill-prepared against attack, how would it stand up to autocratic or any other threatening powers?'<sup>566</sup> Conservatives, in contrast, cared about Britain's interests and honour for their own sake, as unconnected to universal or cosmopolitan ends.

The second major problem with which conservatives diagnosed liberal statesmanship was one not of reticence and ambiguity but of misguided activity. Conservatives abhorred the tendency of liberal statesmen to make statements without commensurate actions; they thought this brought dishonour on Britain, leaving its stature in tatters. Swayne, in 1856 already, remarked that 'We [the British] have done sad mischief already by words not backed by deeds'.<sup>567</sup> British conceptions of moral influence were moulded most, though, by the debates and events surrounding the unification of Italy.

From the perspective of conservative commentators, liberals constantly asserted to other countries how valuable all their liberal ideals were, and how these countries ought really to respect them as well, without ever being willing to take action to ensure that these ideals were realised. This difference between what British statesmen professed to value and what they were actually willing to act upon, conservatives thought, was noticed around Europe, and this mismatch of word and deed made it increasingly difficult for alliance partners such as Prussia to believe that Britain would actually fulfil its commitments if push ever came to shove.<sup>568</sup> In this way, conservatives argued, the tendency of liberal statesmen to prefer words over acts led to the slow but certain isolation of Britain in the international sphere, and to the impotence of its diplomacy – it would end up being ignored in international politics, right up to the point where it would be forced in fact to use force.

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<sup>565</sup> Parry (2006: 279-81). See also Chapter 6's discussion of the *Saturday Review*, which represented one strand of these 'disillusioned' liberals.

<sup>566</sup> Parry (2006: 278-81). See also e.g. Mill in Varouxakis (2013a: 14, 173).

<sup>567</sup> Swayne (1856: 91)

<sup>568</sup> See e.g. Hardman (1859: 617); and Urban (1938: 225) on Disraeli.

Now, conservatives did not mean to argue that Britain should instead *act* to realise liberal ideals across Europe – rather, they implied that liberal statesmen should keep silent about their ideals, and stick to securing the interests of Britain. Regarding those particular interests, and unlike vague ideals, Britain could confidently signal that it would be willing to use force to secure them, and British pronouncements would again be heeded in capitals across Europe.

During the events surrounding the unification of Italy, liberals were in fact divided on the likely efficacy of British moral support alone in securing the liberty of Italy. After the conclusion of the Italian affair, however, it appeared to most liberals as if moral support and ethical appeals had indeed triumphed over the undoubted reactionary intentions of the autocratic states.<sup>569</sup> Conservatives drew very different conclusions regarding the efficacy of moral support. Lever noted that 'England, however, neither could nor would go to war for an Italian question; and it was in vain to expect anything important from notes'.<sup>570</sup> Atkinson remarked that "‘Nationality,’ ‘Independence,’ ‘Republicanism,’ are words not of deliverance, but of delusion', while Patterson predicted that 'Great Britain and Prussia will send protocols, but no troops; and the French Emperor ... will prosecute his game to its close'.<sup>571</sup> Napoleon III and Cavour had realised their aims, and Britain had stood by and let this aggrandisement happen.

During the Danish Duchies affair, conservative commentators again emphasised how liberals, and especially Russell in 1864, indulged extensively in liberal rhetoric, but without having the commitment to back this rhetoric up with action – liberals were satisfied with merely the 'impression of activity'.<sup>572</sup> Russell's statements, conservatives argued, had clearly implied that Britain would come to Denmark's aid in a war over the Duchies. When the moment came, however, Russell backed down and left Denmark to its own devices, using the 'ambiguous language' of the statement as a 'loophole', even though a pledge to aid Denmark had been clear.<sup>573</sup> As a result, Britain 'incurred [other states'] contempt by the way in which we blustered, threatened, and did nothing'.<sup>574</sup> In the words of Cecil, 'Lord Russell's fierce notes and pacific measures' had weakened the

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<sup>569</sup> See e.g. Granville, cited in Beales (1954: 98). See also Beales (1961: 171); Parry (2006: 237-8); Varouxakis (2002a: 154). See further Bagehot (1860: 226) on Gladstone.

<sup>570</sup> Lever (1863b: 656).

<sup>571</sup> Atkinson (1859: 365) and Patterson (1859a: 390). See also Lever (1863c: 56-7, 64); Oliphant (1860a: 363); (1860b: 649); Patterson (1859b: 390); (1860: 14-15); Swayne (1859: 745-7).

<sup>572</sup> Parry (2006: 285).

<sup>573</sup> Cecil (1864b: 520, see also 518).

<sup>574</sup> Gleig (1866: 648).

influence and stature of Britain, since other statesmen could no longer assume that its declarations were a reliable indication of its likelihood to use force.<sup>575</sup> Russell, Patterson noted, had 'changed his opinions so often, that no reliance could be placed upon him by either party'.<sup>576</sup> After Russell's vapid posturing, Gleig complained, 'not the slightest notice is taken' of Britain, while Patterson saw 'her [Britain's] influence reduced to zero'.<sup>577</sup> The liberals' tendency to strongly worded declarations on topics and issues for which they had no willingness to resort to the use of force, was, in the eyes of conservatives, very damaging to the stature of Britain. The hectoring and abuse by liberal statesmen of their foreign counterparts, over constitutional liberties and the sentiment of nationality and such, functioned merely to alienate these statesmen and to isolate Britain further.<sup>578</sup>

Conservatives did not doubt that Britain as a country was ready to be assertive and forceful when its interests were threatened.<sup>579</sup> A crucial step was, however, to convey this willingness to other states. During the Black Sea affair, conservative commentators generally approved of Granville's initial response to the Russian declaration, because of the unusually 'manly and dignified' language which the Liberal foreign secretary used.<sup>580</sup> Conservative commentators could not help, though, but to remind their readers that these words only mattered if they were to be followed by acts, and that the liberals were characteristically ambiguous on this score.<sup>581</sup> Unfortunately, conservatives observed, other liberal statesmen and publicists quickly worked their pernicious influence.<sup>582</sup> Their pacific statements and writings gave foreigners the impression that Britain lacked the will to use force, lacked the determination to demand that its interests be respected. Exactly such failed signalling, conservatives noted, had caused the Crimean War. If Russia were not quickly disabused of the mistaken impression of British lack of backbone given by the liberals, then 'there is no chance of

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<sup>575</sup> Cecil (1864a: 285).

<sup>576</sup> Patterson (1864b: 640); see also Cecil (1864b: 524).

<sup>577</sup> Gleig (1866: 649) and Patterson (1864b: 641); see also Cecil (1864a: 285); (1864b: 481-2, 516, 522, 525); (1871: 284); Lever (1869: 357, 359); (1871a: 236); (1870b: 601); Oliphant (1864a: 383-4, 394); (1865: 118); Patterson (1864a: 113); (1864b: 638, 642-5, 648); (1864c: 244); Swayne (1867: 195); Wilson (1870: 381).

<sup>578</sup> Cecil (1864a: 285-6); Oliphant (1865: 125); Patterson (1864b: 638, 640, 644-6, 648); Swayne (1867: 195); Wilson (1870: 380).

<sup>579</sup> See e.g. *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 24, p. 4): 'The English people love peace, but they love honour more'.

<sup>580</sup> *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 17, p. 4).

<sup>581</sup> Fowler (1871: 929); *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 17, p. 4); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 18, p. 4).

<sup>582</sup> Conservatives often inaccurately lumped all liberals and radicals together. They were at this time especially likely to mention the Cobdenites, Gladstone, and Mill in one breath, as if their world-views were one and the same. See e.g. *The Standard* (Nov. 18, p. 4); (Dec. 1, p. 4).

our escaping war': Russia would press Britain too hard again, thinking the British would bend, and war would again be unavoidable.<sup>583</sup> If Britain refused to *act* as a great power, conservatives warned, it would no longer be *treated* as one.

During the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78 the Conservative party was in government. Still, conservatives argued, liberals did not act as proper statesmen, in fostering the Bulgarian Agitation movement at home. As during the Black Sea affair, conservatives were concerned over the signals which liberal conduct sent to statesmen abroad. These statesmen would let their observations of Britain's domestic political scene inform their expectations regarding the will of Britain's cabinet and its ability to put its desired policy into effect. Domestic dissension would suggest a weak foreign policy. Conservatives observed this general effect in all major diplomatic episodes of the Eastern Question.<sup>584</sup> In particular, they argued most strenuously that the liberals' agitation over the Bulgarian atrocities, in the words of Cowell, 'led to such false notion abroad as to our changed policy at home'; 'the authority of this country was suddenly weakened by apparent vacillation of purpose – apparent hostility to its own Government. ... The whole drift of agitation was in favour of inviting Russian intervention'.<sup>585</sup>

Conservatives thus argued that the emotive ideals which liberals and radicals projected onto the European sphere warped their understanding of the basic dynamics of international politics, which necessitated an assertive foreign policy. Liberals hoped to avoid any and all conflict, but thereby invited war. They hoped to spur the realisation of their ethical ideals, but thereby merely squandered the stature of Britain.

## Conclusion

Conservatives assumed that military force and countries' self-interest were the two phenomena central to understanding international affairs. These two insights combined to form the bedrock of conservative international political thought, and from them followed other important facets of this thought, such as the importance to effective diplomacy of having an army well-prepared for war, even in times of peace; the basis of cooperation between states in fragile, temporary convergences of interests; the

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<sup>583</sup> *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 18, p. 4). See also *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 16, p. 4); W.G. Hamley (1870c: 789-90); (1871a: 244); Lever (1871a: 233); Manners (1871: 950); *The Standard* (Nov. 11, p. 4); (Nov. 15, p. 4); (Nov. 16, p. 4); (Nov. 19, p. 4); (Nov. 21, p. 4); (Nov. 23, p. 4); (Dec. 1, p. 4); (Dec. 15, p. 4).

<sup>584</sup> Cecil (1877b); Cowell (1876d: 643; 1877c: 375; 1877f: 741); Craik and Smith (1877: 309); Hamley (1877f: 635, 653-4); (1878b: 234); Northcote (1877: 66-8); Northcote and Allardyce (1878: 767).

<sup>585</sup> Cowell (1877d: 508 and 1876d: 643; see also 1876d: 638; 1877a: 118). See also Shand (1878: 753);

importance of a state safeguarding its stature; the vacuity of mere moral support; and the consequent necessity for an assertive foreign policy. From this perspective on the dynamics of international relations, conservative commentators criticised liberals for their poor statesmanship. On the one hand, liberals were not assertive enough in their foreign policy due to their aversion to any kind of conflict. On the other hand, liberal statesmen had a tendency to demand that their counterparts observe liberal values, without being willing to back up these demands with forceful action. Conservatives asserted that liberals, through these defects in their statesmanship, squandered Britain's stature and merely invited the conflict they were so eager to avoid.

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Smith (1876: 549); Smith and Layard (1877: 278).

## IV. International order

Conservatives consistently worried about two major threats to the European order; general war and the hegemony of a single state. These concerns led them to advocate the pursuit of the two converse situations: order and stability and a balance of power. These were the main normative commitments of conservative commentators regarding international affairs. Conservatives discerned a major role for the treaty system in fostering stability in international affairs, by codifying settlements and thereby temporarily removing them from the realm of politics and diplomacy. As such, the Treaty of Vienna was a major linchpin of the international order, and conservatives initially despaired as they saw the treaty losing its grip on European affairs. They managed to regain their equanimity, however, due to their reliance on the balance of power. This notion pervaded their perspective on European international relations; the balance of power had been the final surety for the treaty system, and would, they hoped, manage to sustain the order and stability of Europe even after the Vienna settlement had gone.

### **The possibilities of general war and European hegemony**

Conservatives perennially perceived two major threats to the established European order: that of European politics deteriorating into a general war, similar to the Napoleonic wars, with all its attendant suffering; and that of the preponderance or hegemony of a single state with overweening influence, and a concomitant loss of independent action for the other states of Europe. A threat to the independence of Britain itself did not feature significantly — conservatives from the educated classes generally derided invasion-scares as the irrational passion of the masses (even as they had no qualms using this sentiment to try and increase funding for Britain's military).<sup>586</sup>

Conservatives feared that any military conflict between great powers, started with however limited aims in mind, could easily come to involve other states and turn into a general war between the great powers. They assumed that any conflict would inevitably tend to spread as it impinged on the interests of other states, drawing those in, until the whole of Europe would again be at war.<sup>587</sup> This worry informed conservatives' policy preferences. For instance, as the Crimean War was nearing its end,

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<sup>586</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1859: 12, 18-20, 29); Cowell (1878c: 386); (1878d: 512); Hamley (1878b: 244). See also Eldridge (1996:69) on both Cecil and Disraeli. By the late 1870s, though, conservatives started to invoke a threat to the security of the Empire somewhat regularly, as a lesser version of a threat to the security of Britain itself.



conservative commentators still saw gains to be made for British interests and stature in continuing the war. They were haunted, however, by the possibility of the conflict turning into a general war, which would destroy the order of Europe. For most conservative commentators the fear of a general conflagration won out over the enticement of furthering British interests and prestige.<sup>588</sup> Two decades later, in the early stages of the Russo-Turkish war, conservatives advocated mediation between Russia and Turkey by the other great powers in general and Britain in particular, in order to get the two warring parties to agree on a settlement as quickly as possible, and preclude the chance of the conflict spreading.<sup>589</sup> And during the first stages of the 1859 Italian crisis, conservatives worried that the tensions in Italy might lead to a war, which could spread to involve the other powers of Europe. Indeed, the policy of Malmesbury and Derby, in power until June 1859, was aimed first at avoiding the incidence of war, and when war had broken out, at preventing its further spread.<sup>590</sup>

Conservatives were generally willing to countenance the upheaval of a general war only if it were necessary to prevent a bid for European hegemony, their second perennial concern. At different times throughout these decades, conservative commentators felt compelled to warn Britain of possible projects aimed at European hegemony entertained by Russia, France, and Prussia. During both the Crimean War and the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78, they argued that Russian policy 'was part of a system ... which if not checked, would certainly make the Czar lord-paramount of all Europe'.<sup>591</sup> Britain had to act vigorously in order to prevent the Tsar from 'establishing Russian supremacy in Europe' as part of his 'schemes of vast and even universal empire'.<sup>592</sup> Conservatives diagnosed Napoleon III with similar ambitions during the late 1850s and early 1860s. With peace re-established after the 1859 armistice of Villafranca, conservative commentators speculated on the gains realised by Napoleon III and how these would enable him to tread a path of successive wars, conceived of as limited in scope, but which would nevertheless imperil the European order by furthering

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<sup>587</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1859: 7); Hardman (1859: 621); Patterson (1859a: 380); Tremenheere (1859: 264-5).

<sup>588</sup> See e.g. Aytoun (1854: 614-5); E.B. Hamley (1856a: 241); Lytton (1855: 1387); Patterson (1856a: 609-10).

<sup>589</sup> Cowell (1876d: 635-6, 645; 1876e: 763, 767); Craik (1877: 585-6); Hamley (1877g: 774).

<sup>590</sup> See e.g. Malmesbury (1859a); (1859c).

<sup>591</sup> Patterson (1855c: 634-5). See also Disraeli (1855: 1737-8); Elwin (1854: 298-9); E.B. Hamley (1855c: 353); (1855i: 261); (1856a: 241); Hardman (1858: 85); Libri and Guizot (1855: 494, 499-500); Patterson (1855c: 637, 643-4); (1856a: 611); Swayne (1854a: 592); (1855c: 335).

<sup>592</sup> Keppel (1878: 536) and Smith and Layard (1877: 302-3). See also Craik and Smith (1877: 299-300); Patterson (1878: 486, 498); Russel (1877: 240).

Napoleon III's project for hegemony.<sup>593</sup>

As Napoleon III's ambitions faded, conservatives saw Bismarck as smoothly picking up the torch. At the time of both the Danish Duchies affair and the Sadowa conflict, they discerned the first intimations of a possible Prussian project of universal dominion.<sup>594</sup> The 'transparent ... object' of the Germans, conservatives argued, was territorial aggrandisement, in the context of a more general ambition to fashion 'a mighty German Empire', with the ability to wage aggressive war.<sup>595</sup> Prussia's campaigns of 1864 and 1866 had 'resulted in the establishment of a military empire, on the future career of which it would be profitless to speculate'.<sup>596</sup> But speculate conservatives did, especially after Prussia's unification of Germany and defeat of France in the 1870-71 war.

These possible projects for hegemony were doubly worrying to conservatives, because they thought that any actual bid for hegemony would spark a general war, as a coalition would be formed to stop the aggressor from gaining dominion over Europe. Conservatives here often referred to the Napoleonic wars as part of their argument. They for instance argued that Napoleon III was taking a similar course to Napoleon I, with Italian events being merely the first step in a grand project of French territorial expansion, which if left unchecked would destroy the existing order of Europe and again plunge its states into a "Great War".<sup>597</sup> Conservatives similarly combined these two concerns when considering the case of Prussia after the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian war. They feared that newly united Germany might pursue further conquests or even a hegemonic position in central Europe — which would throw the continent into a general war.<sup>598</sup> Hamley predicted that 'to restore equilibrium will be a difficult and possibly a bloody task', while Cecil noted that 'at this moment, the prospects of an enduring European peace are gloomy indeed'.<sup>599</sup> European international relations faced

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<sup>593</sup> Cecil (1859: 6-7, 18-20, 25-30); Forsyth (1861: 136, 142, 173-7); Oliphant (1860a: 359); (1860b: 638, 650); (1860c: 740); Patterson (1859a: 387, 390); (1859b: 379, 385, 389); (1860: 48-51, 69-74); (1862b: 255); (1862c: 508, 512, 518, 524, 526); Tremenheere (1859: 267-8).

<sup>594</sup> Cecil (1864a: 240, 242, 248, 262, 267-8, 270, 275, 279-80); Oliphant (1864a: 518); (1865: 130); Patterson (1864a: 128-30, 132); (1864b: 128-9<sup>594594</sup>).

<sup>595</sup> Patterson (1864a: 129) and Cecil (1864a: 239). See also Cecil (1864a: 240); Oliphant (1864a: 391-2).

<sup>596</sup> Gleig (1866: 648 and 642); see also Gleig (1866: 652); Hamley, E.B. (1866: 247); Wilson (1870: 380).

<sup>597</sup> Aytoun (1860: 247, 253); Cecil (1859: 1, 9-10, 25-30, 32); Forsyth (1861: 136); Oliphant (1860b: 650); (1860c: 740); Patterson (1860: 41, 129-131); Stanley (1861: 165, 177); Tremenheere (1859: 247-8, 259-60, 267-8).

<sup>598</sup> Cecil (1864a: 286-7); (1870: 545-6, 550-1, 553-6); Dasent (1870: 295, 313-4, 327); Gleig (1870a: 656); (1870b: 662); Hamley (1870c: 784-6, 789); (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 488-90, 495-6, 504-6); Lever (1870c: 510); (1871a: 230-2); (1871d: 370); (1871f: 728); Wilson (1870: 391-2); (1871a: 91-2); (1871b: 366, 369-70, 372-3).

<sup>599</sup> Hamley (1870c: 789) and Cecil (1870: 554; see also 555-6).

its two spectres of universal dominion and widespread war.

### **The desirability of order and stability, and a balance of power**

Conservatives' perennial concern over the threats of hegemony and general war led them to focus on securing the obverse of these situations, namely international order and stability and a balance of power. The rest of this chapter will discuss these two normative commitments of conservatives, whereby discussion of the first will lead to discussion of the second.

In the liberals' perspective on the international sphere, 'right' loomed large. Liberals posited the existence of a universal moral ideal, what Gladstone termed the 'law of nations' or 'idea of Public Right'.<sup>600</sup> Liberals could detail this universal ethics in different ways, from merely asserting the desirability of strong parliamentary systems to advocating the self-determination of nationalities and abolition of all armies. Either way, they perceived a general progress of civilisation in the European sphere, which would, over time, lead to the realisation of their moral ideals across Europe. Liberals consequently apprehended the events of international politics through the moral categories contained in their universal ethics.

In the conservatives' perspective on the international sphere, 'order' loomed large. Their concern was not with the realisation of a particular ideal configuration of Europe, but firstly with the durability of the configuration which happened to exist and secondly that any change would be orderly – that war and the use of force, especially on a European scale, were avoided. Conservatives thought that the order and stability of the European sphere depended on a set of stable settlements, between the great powers, of the major potential disputes. There were lots of potential flashpoints in international relations where great powers' interests clashed. Europe was stable or orderly when none of these conflicts flared up in a major way. This meant that international politics consisted primarily of great powers manoeuvring around these major issues, trying to ensure stability through settlements, while also securing their interests to the fullest extent.

Conservatives considered the Treaty of Vienna, a collection of settlements of major potential conflicts, an important buttress of international stability. The dismantling of the Vienna settlement implied to them the overthrow of the existing

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<sup>600</sup> Gladstone (1870: 593); see also e.g. Bagehot (1864); (1866); Senior (1865: 149-50, 156, 254-6, 272). See further Parry (2006: 250-55); Pratt (1985); Schreuder (1978: 119-120, 134); Schroeder (1980: 165, 188-9); Varouxakis (2002: 91-3).

order of Europe. For instance, during the Crimean War, conservatives feared the conflict spreading partly because it would inevitably 'become complicated with revolutionary and national movements'.<sup>601</sup> These movements agitated for major territorial changes which would dissolve the Vienna settlement and lead to a fundamental restructuring of the European order. While the Treaty of Vienna loomed large in the conservatives' vision of the established order of Europe, in the years after the unification of Italy they eventually felt forced to acknowledge its demise.

The following two case studies, on the debates surrounding the unifications of Italy and of Germany, show how conservatives held a strong normative commitment to international order and stability, both in the context of the Vienna settlement and when deprived of its comforting structuring of European relations. Throughout their commentary on Italian events, conservatives were becoming increasingly concerned that this treaty system was losing its centrality both to thought on the proper configuration of Europe and to the practice of international affairs. They argued that the Vienna settlement was worthwhile because it preserved the peace, helped to avoid conflicts, and sustained the order of Europe – 'the great European system', as Forsyth put it, 'which, while it was respected, secured so many years of peace and prosperity to all'.<sup>602</sup>

Most liberals and radicals, in contrast, thought that order would only come to Europe once it was organised along the principles of nationality and of the sovereign will of the people. Until that time, those countries in which people lived under detested, foreign rule would be perpetual sources of instability and conflict. Russell stated that 'the independence of states is never so secure as when the sovereign authority is supported by the attachment of the people', and Gladstone argued that 'with Italy as it has been ever since 1848 Europe never can be safe'.<sup>603</sup> Europe would be peaceful only if justly ordered. This made the existing Vienna settlement, in its inattention to the wishes of the people, a source of disorder in the eyes of liberals, rather than the guarantee of European stability.<sup>604</sup>

The most salient difference between liberals and conservatives as regards the particulars of the debate on Italian events lay in the fact that when forced to choose between respecting treaty rights and realising abstract ideals, as they were over the course of Piedmontese and French annexations, liberals privileged the moral ideals

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<sup>601</sup> Patterson (1856a: 611). See also Cecil (1855: 1600-2); Lytton (1855: 1388-90); Patterson (1856a: 612, 614); (1856b: 730).

<sup>602</sup> Forsyth (1861: 176-7). See also e.g. Derby and Malmesbury cited in Hicks (2007: 207).

<sup>603</sup> Gladstone (1860: 104).

<sup>604</sup> See e.g. Urban (1938: 387, 397, 427). See also Gladstone (1860: 103-4).

which they saw realised in Italian events, while conservatives preferred the maintenance of general order and stability through the Vienna settlement and treaty system.

Conservatives argued that war had its own logic and was strongly path-dependent, and feared that a war to liberate Italy could easily snowball into a grand conflict. Most liberals seemed more sanguine – at least when considering Italian affairs.<sup>605</sup> Gladstone considered the constrained use of force by Britain for Italian ideals a possibility: 'Neither do I think there is any force in the argument that when once committed we cannot recede – For what we have in view is a matter of right and order'.<sup>606</sup> And when right and order were restored, Britain would withdraw again. Conservatives argued, in contrast, that even if a war was started with noble ideals in mind – and this was a very big if for conservatives – it would, firstly, quickly evolve into a struggle for supremacy between the belligerents, and, secondly, likely involve more and more other states over time, as their interests would be affected over the course of the conflict.<sup>607</sup>

In addition to this immediate threat of a general war, conservatives argued that the outcome of the Italian course of events provided amenable circumstances for further conflicts and disorder. Many worried about the structural changes which events had set in motion.<sup>608</sup> In the aftermath of the Italian affair, the incentives, interests, and alliances of great power politics had shifted towards a configuration which promised further strife. They expected in particular a revival of the Eastern Question by a revisionist Austria and Russia, and the French conquest of the German Rhine provinces, as part of a French project for hegemony over Europe.<sup>609</sup> Whatever allowing Austria to be turfed out of Italy might do for the Italians, it promised, according to conservatives, but more war and schemes of conquest for the rest of Europe.<sup>610</sup>

Over the course of events in Italy many liberal commentators preferred realising the aims of independence and unity for the Italians over maintaining the Vienna settlement and treaty system. As the Vienna settlement was both ignored in the practice

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<sup>605</sup> See e.g. Palmerston cited in Hicks (2007: 234).

<sup>606</sup> Gladstone (1860: 102).

<sup>607</sup> Aytoun (1860: 247); Cecil (1859: 1); Hardman (1859: 612, 621, 623); Tremenheere (1859: 264-5, 267).

<sup>608</sup> Aytoun (1860: 253); Cecil (1862: 226, 234-5); Derby, cited in Hicks (2007: 208); Forsyth (1861: 142, 171); Lever (1863c: 56-7); Oliphant (1860a: 360); Patterson (1859a: 391-2); (1859b: 385); (1860: 91); Tremenheere (1859: 262, 266); Tremenheere and Portland (1865: 371-2).

<sup>609</sup> Atkinson (1859: 350); Aytoun (1860: 247); Cecil (1859: 1, 32); Hardman (1859: 614); Oliphant (1860a: 362); (1860b: 638); (1860c: 740); Patterson (1859a: 382); (1859b: 375, 378-9); (1860: 94-7); Stanley (1860: 163); (1861: 165, 177); Swayne (1859: 747-9); Tremenheere (1859: 244, 247-8, 259-60). Compare also J.F. Stephen (1859: 188-9), making this point.

<sup>610</sup> Cecil (1859: 11, 23-4); Oliphant (1860b: 650); (1860c: 734, 740); Patterson (1859a: 387); (1859b: 389); (1860: 107-8, 112-5, 117-21); (1862c: 518, 524).

of international politics and rejected in the debates justifying the course of events, conservatives considered these events as a *de facto* step in and *de jure* acceptance of 'breaking up the great European system' embodied by the Treaty of Vienna.<sup>611</sup> Piedmont's lauded Italian interventions in fact broke down the settlement arrived at in Vienna, diminished respect for treaties, and through precedent provided further excuse for forceful meddling in the affairs of other states.<sup>612</sup> Conservatives worried about these developments because they considered the Vienna settlement and its treaty system as essential in preserving the peace and stability of Europe.<sup>613</sup>

Conservatives' concern over order and stability was also in evidence in the British debates on the rise of Prussia and unification of Germany. During both the Danish Duchies affair and the Sadowa conflict, conservatives discerned the germination of a more serious threat to the European order in the future. In 1864 Cecil, Oliphant, and Patterson all wondered whether the territorial changes would impair 'the equilibrium of Europe' and make less likely 'the preservation of peace'.<sup>614</sup> Both episodes indicated an aggressive attitude on the part of the Germans, which was likely to threaten Europe's peace and stability in the future.<sup>615</sup> Liberals, in contrast, thought the Danish Duchies affair was significant – beyond the immediate interests involved – as it involved the norms of the self-determination of peoples and the spread of more liberal government.<sup>616</sup> Moreover, liberals generally approved of the Prussian victory in 1866 because it banished the deleterious influence of the Austrian Empire from the German states.<sup>617</sup>

During the Franco-Prussian war, liberals perceived a good side and a bad side in the conflict. They initially sided with Germany and thought the war significant 'as a moral crusade whose outcome must raise the pitch of European civilisation'.<sup>618</sup> Conservatives disagreed with this assessment.<sup>619</sup> They disapproved of both sides; neither, they argued, had a sufficiently compelling reason to justify the general disorder

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<sup>611</sup> Forsyth (1861: 176-7).

<sup>612</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1862: 212-214, 231). See also Chapter 2.

<sup>613</sup> Cecil (1859: 24-30); (1862: 212-4); Forsyth (1861: 136, 142, 176-7); Hardman (1859: 617); Patterson (1859a: 378, 391-2); (1859b: 375); (1860: 41-51); Tremeneere (1859: 264-5).

<sup>614</sup> Cecil (1864a: 279-80); see also Oliphant (1864a: 518); (1865: 130); Patterson (1864a: 128).

<sup>615</sup> Cecil (1864a: 239-40, 242, 262, 267-270, 275); Gleig (1866: 642, 648, 652); Hamley, E.B. (1866: 247); Oliphant (1864a: 391-2); Patterson (1864a: 129-30, 132); (1864b: 128-9); Wilson (1870: 380).

<sup>616</sup> Sandiford (1975: 72, 89-90, 95-99, 117-8). See e.g. Mill (1865).

<sup>617</sup> Mosse (1958: 245-6); Pratt (1985: 546). See e.g. Dicey (1866a: 389).

<sup>618</sup> Pratt (1985: 557). See e.g. Bagehot (1871a: 253); Dwyer (1870: 386); Gladstone (1870: 564-5, 578-80); Mill (1870). See also Parry (2006: 247-8, 277-8, 282); Postgate and Vallance (1937: 127-8); Pratt (1985: 543-4, 547-8); Raymond (1921: 73-5).

<sup>619</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1870: 544-5); Vincent (1872a: 332); (1872b: 569).

caused by a major war.<sup>620</sup> As Prussia extended the war beyond its initial victory, in order to force the cession of Alsace and Lorraine, liberals came to think that Prussia had abandoned 'fair play between nations' and had lost the imprimatur of morality.<sup>621</sup> Germans, liberals felt forced to conclude, were not as high up on the ladder of civilisation as liberals had hoped and assumed.<sup>622</sup> Conservatives also thought the demand for territory significant, as it meant that Prussia's statesmen had adopted an aggressive attitude.<sup>623</sup> They felt anxious that this martial passion might persist and widen, starting Prussia down a path of conquest and towards a bid for the hegemony of Europe.<sup>624</sup> A similar difference marked liberal and conservative thought on the significance of the annexations themselves. Liberals had a problem with the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, because they thought that the unwillingness of the population to leave France and join Germany made annexation immoral.<sup>625</sup> Conservatives had a problem with the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, because they thought that the loss of territory would spark an enduring passion for revenge in France, leading to renewed conflict at the earliest opportunity.<sup>626</sup>

Liberal concern, over and above particular British interests involved, was consequently over whether events represented the progress of civilisation or rather its stagnation.<sup>627</sup> Conservatives in contrast primarily perceived the European sphere as in a state of order or disorder, with international crises consisting of threats to and deviations from this order.

### **Treaties and stability and order**

Conservatives held a normative commitment to order and stability in Europe. How did they expect to secure this stability? This section analyses conservative thought on the role of treaties: first an account of the logic of the conservatives' position that treaties helped to provide order, and then an account of the evolution of this thought over the decades studied, as conservatives were faced with the demise of the Treaty of Vienna

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<sup>620</sup> Cecil (1864a: 240-1); Dasent (1870: 300-2); Gleig (1870a: 650-1); Hamley (1870a: 384-5); (1871a: 253); (1871b: 375, 388); (1871c: 504); Lever (1870c: 510); Wilson (1871a: 82); (1871b: 367).

<sup>621</sup> Parry (2006: 283); see also Pratt (1985: 559-60, 562).

<sup>622</sup> Pratt (1985: 556, 562, 569-70, 574-5); Schroeder (1980: 164).

<sup>623</sup> Cecil (1870: 540, 554); Dasent (1870: 313, 319); Hamley (1871a: 243, 255); (1871c: 488-93); Lever (1871b: 583); Oliphant (1864b: 511); Wilson (1870: 383); (1871b: 367-8, 370).

<sup>624</sup> Cecil (1870: 546, 554-6); Hamley (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 488-90, 495).

<sup>625</sup> See e.g. Bagehot (1870); (1871a); Gladstone (1870: 582); Gladstone to Granville, 4 Oct 1870, quoted in Schreuder (1978: 114). See further Pratt (1985: 565-6); Schreuder (1978: 112).

<sup>626</sup> Cecil (1870: 544, 551-5); Dasent (1870: 309-311, 318); Gleig (1870b: 663); Hamley (1871a: 254-5); Lever (1870c: 511-2); Wilson (1871b: 370).

<sup>627</sup> See e.g. Dicey (1867: 173).

and had to adapt their world-view.

### The role of the treaty system in fostering order and stability

Conservatives thought of treaties as important pillars of international stability.<sup>628</sup> Treaties, in the conservative conceptualisation of international politics, were codified settlements, which made explicit and fixed the compromise which the parties to the treaty had reached.<sup>629</sup> Most treaties would reflect the settlement of a particular dispute, but they could, like the Treaty of Vienna, contain grander settlements. Conservative commentators usually merely referred to any particular treaties, despatches, or circulars relevant to their argument — they rarely invoked the concepts of international or public law. This made sense, because for conservatives international law was nothing more than the collection of all extant treaties.<sup>630</sup> The international law of Europe was then nothing more than those particular provisions on which everyone had decided to agree; in particular, it had no universal ethical content. Liberals, in contrast, saw international law ‘as having an ethical core and purpose’ and as being subject to progress.<sup>631</sup>

Conservatives evinced a distinct preference for a general respect for treaties, but they did not think that such respect would make the international realm into a law-based order. Instead, international relations was still fundamentally founded on the possible and actual use of force. Exactly this centrality of force made the treaty system valuable; the diplomatic order helped to canalise the effects of changed power differentials and made that the centrality of force need not imply the escalation of disputes to conflict and war. For conservatives, acting to sustain order and stability in international affairs consequently consisted of conserving the established framework of negotiated settlements and treaties. As Cowell stated, ‘to renew the public respect for treaties ... has been an achievement worthy of a great Conservative Power’.<sup>632</sup> Conservatives valued the treaty system because it helped to limit the incidence of war and, when war did occur, helped to constrain its scope.

The first way in which the treaty system sustained stability was by lessening the incidence of disputes. Treaties did so because they provided the settlements of

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<sup>628</sup> Lever (1871a: 230); Oliphant (1864a: 396); (1864b: 506); (1865: 128).

<sup>629</sup> Cecil (1864a: 238); Lever (1871a: 232); Oliphant (1864b: 504); Patterson (1864a: 110, 115). Conservatives were here in tune with the more general nineteenth century trend to value codification in international politics. See Keene (2012: 480).

<sup>630</sup> See e.g. Keppel (1878: 535); Smith (1876: 570); Smith and Cowell (1877: 591); Smith and Layard (1877: 278).

<sup>631</sup> Sylvest (2009a: 76). See also Koskenniemi (2001: 16, 46); Sylvest (2005: 12, 30); (2009a: 65, 68, 73).

<sup>632</sup> Cowell (1876c: 461-2).



international politics with durability. Cecil for instance stated that 'the first object of a [peace] treaty ... should be to make future war improbable. ... the establishment of an enduring peace'.<sup>633</sup> There were two ways in which conservatives thought more enduring settlements made for fewer conflicts.

Firstly, any time that an issue became contentious would involve the chance of the disagreement spiralling out of control and into open war.<sup>634</sup> The more enduring the settlement, the less often did the dispute flare up, with its possibility of conflict and war. If there were no formal treaty reflecting the settlement arrived at, the issue would be in constant flux, drawing the attention of statesmen with every change in the particular balance of power sustaining the settlement, and requiring its constant adjustment. By making the terms of the settlement explicit, treaties ensured that states had less of an opportunity to challenge the details of the settlement in the future. By eliciting the consensual, formal agreement of all states involved, treaties ensured that any subsequent repudiation of its terms would reflect badly on that state's honour.

Conservatives considered the clarity of a treaty, regarding the commitments made by the parties, as particularly valuable.<sup>635</sup> Any vagueness or ambiguity would leave the issue on the table, with any party tempted to reopen it by advancing an alternative interpretation whenever they would see an advantage in doing so. Cecil argued, regarding the Danish Duchies affair, that 'the interminable character of this dispute, and the disastrous consequences to which it threatens to lead, are owing in no small degree to the singular vagueness' of the promises and engagements made by the parties.<sup>636</sup> An unambiguous treaty would have removed the main excuse the German states gave for reopening the dispute.

Despite the relative clarity of treaties, though, conservatives still thought that a significant part of the game of diplomacy consisted in shaping the commonly recognised 'meaning to be attached to the promises' and statements made in extant despatches and treaties.<sup>637</sup> Moreover, if strong self-interest and a perceived absence of forceful repercussions combined, then they trumped any action being clearly against treaty obligations: clarity in treaties had not stopped Russia from rescinding the neutrality of the Black Sea nor Italy from annexing the Papal States or Venice. A dispute

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<sup>633</sup> Cecil (1870: 546-7 and 551).

<sup>634</sup> Cecil (1864a: 238, 280); Patterson (1864a: 112, 129-130); (1864b: 644); (1864c: 253); Wilson (1870: 380).

<sup>635</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1864a: 257, 273). Mountague Bernard, Professor of International Law and Diplomacy at Oxford, laid the same emphasis. See Bernard (1868); also Varouxakis (2013a: 71).

<sup>636</sup> Cecil (1864a: 273).

settled through an unambiguous treaty would be removed from international politics, but only until such a time that the provisions of the treaty either no longer fit the facts on the ground or until power relations changed to such an extent that one of the states would reopen the question anyway.

Secondly, more enduring settlements made negotiated settlements a more worthwhile alternative to the use of force for states wanting to secure their interests. Conservatives thought that international politics would only be stable and orderly if statesmen had a general sense that settlements would endure, that they were not constantly open to renegotiation.<sup>638</sup> Treaties, being codified settlements, could provide this sense of constancy.<sup>639</sup> This was most clear in their characterisation of the observe situation. If treaty obligations were routinely ignored, statesmen would start to think that they couldn't trust each other to stick to their agreements, and that they consequently could not resolve their differences through negotiated settlements.<sup>640</sup> If, however, the treaty system was robustly in place, statesmen needed to be less jealous and suspicious of each other's aims and intentions, since they could trust that other states were not constantly angling to revive extant disputes. They would be less tempted to assume the worst. The more respect there was for treaties, the greater the chance that any particular dispute would be resolved through negotiation rather than war.

Treaties thus served, for conservatives, as a way of limiting the number of disputes which were current in international politics at any particular time. An international relations which revolved around settling disputes in treaties was at basis orderly and stable, with particular issues being re-settled at particular times. A world without robust treaties would be disorderly and unstable. All settlements would be open to readjustment all the time, with the potential of conflict always present.<sup>641</sup> And the more active disputes there were, the larger the chance of war, and any war could spiral out of control into a Europe-wide conflagration.

The second boon of the treaty system which conservatives discerned was that even if war broke out, the existence of a robust treaty system would help limit the scope and intensity of the conflict. Firstly, war would be less likely to spread, since great powers which were a part of the original settlement which was now in the balance

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<sup>637</sup> Cecil (1864a: 255).

<sup>638</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1864a: 284-5); (1871: 282-3); Lever (1869: 357).

<sup>639</sup> Cecil (1864a: 238); Lever (1871a: 230-2); Oliphant (1864b: 504); Patterson (1864a: 110, 115).

<sup>640</sup> Craik and Smith (1877: 309).

<sup>641</sup> Cowell (1878e: 636); *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 28, p. 4); Lever (1871a: 230-2); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 17, p. 4); (Nov. 25, p. 4); (Dec. 1, p. 4).

would feel less of a need to involve themselves. Cowell argued, in the context of the Eastern Question crisis in 1878, that as long as there was some trust in treaties, great powers would feel secure that they would have a say in the final settlement, which would help to keep them neutral even when the conflict came to involve their interests.<sup>642</sup> In the terms of these conservatives' theory of international relations, these great powers trusted that they would be able to apply their force hypothetically in negotiations afterwards, rather than needing to do so actually during the war. If, however, these neutral powers thought the belligerent powers would not recognise their right to a voice in the final settlement, as derived from their being signatories of the pre-existing treaty, then they would be better off intervening before gains were a *fait accompli*. The treaty system consequently changed the incentive for neutral great powers into involving themselves in any conflict later rather than sooner, making the spread of conflict into a general war less likely.

Secondly, the treaty system helped to lessen the intensity of war. Here conservative commentators assumed that the victor in any war would only be satisfied with a material guarantee that its foe would not attack it in turn in the future. Treaties could include a guarantee of this nature – such as the neutrality of the Black Sea prescribed by the Treaty of Paris, which prevented Russia from again attacking the Ottoman Empire. However, conservatives noted, if treaties were in fact not generally respected, then they would not form a material constraint – as soon as the conquered state felt like it, it would ignore the treaty. If, conservatives predicted, the victor could not rely on a treaty to keep his foe harmless, then he would make sure to ruin the country sufficiently to make it incapable of revenge.<sup>643</sup> The treaty system consequently limited the intensity and acrimony of war, making for a more speedy return to order and stability in international affairs.

Conservatives thought that statesmen ought to act in their country's interest and sustain Europe's stability and order, and thus ought to support the established treaty system, which initially included not least the Treaty of Vienna. This they considered part of a moderate as opposed to aggressive attitude towards international affairs.<sup>644</sup> This sentiment was a far cry from Gladstone's formulation, as understood by conservatives, of the public good as deriving from a universal ethics for which a country should act even if in opposition to established treaties. For liberals more generally the Treaty of

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<sup>642</sup> Cowell (1878c: 642).

<sup>643</sup> *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 26, p. 4); (Nov. 28, p. 4). *Pace* Mill (1870a); (1870b).

<sup>644</sup> See e.g. Cowell (1876c: 461-2).

Vienna and conservatives' reverential attitude towards it inhibited the realisation of normative ideals in international affairs. For conservatives the Vienna settlement and the treaty system it represented were essential to their normative concerns for the stability and order of Europe. Since, for conservatives, a general respect for treaties, for the established order, was a crucial means in avoiding large-scale wars, they thought that even a cosmopolitan moral judgement would still place treaty obligations over the imperatives of sympathy.<sup>645</sup> They considered the liberal alternative of a rejection of the Vienna settlement and focus on oppressed nationalities as a major problem and a cause of the degeneration of international relations over the 1860s, replacing a buttress of order and stability with facile justifications for intervention and war. This tension was readily apparent in the evolution of conservative thought on the Vienna Settlement and the treaty system from the 1850s to the 1870s.

#### The evolution of conservative thought on the Treaty of Vienna

Conservative thought on the Treaty of Vienna and the treaty system in general evolved over the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, as conservatives perceived first threats to and then the demise of the Vienna settlement, and as they thought about the influence of the treaty system on international affairs after these changes. There were four parts to this evolution. During the debates surrounding the unification of Italy conservatives thought that Britain's commitment to the Treaty of Vienna was flagging and they argued for the treaty's worth. By the mid-60s, conservatives acknowledged the demise of the Vienna settlement and they worried about the disorder and conflict which would be involved in the establishment of a new grand settlement of Europe. By 1870-71 this anxiety both came to a head and evolved as conservatives no longer considered a new grand settlement possible, but instead feared the perpetual continuation of conflict and disorder. This anxiety passed, however, and by the late 1870s conservative commentators evinced a sense that stability could be secured in international affairs without a grand settlement on the model of the Treaty of Vienna, order being realised instead through the individual settlement of particular disputes.

Conservatives understood the Treaty of Vienna as a grand collection of settlements between the great powers, removing many potential disputes from the realm of international politics.<sup>646</sup> They valued it highly as a great boon for stability and they advocated the maintenance of the treaty as a mainstay of British foreign policy, up to

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<sup>645</sup> See e.g. Cowell (1878e: 652); Frere (1876: 512).

and including their contributions to the debates surrounding the unification of Italy.<sup>647</sup> In these debates, conservative commentators evinced a sense that the normative force of the Vienna settlement was at stake. In reaction, they argued for the value of the Treaty of Vienna, the settlement of Europe which it contained, and the treaty system in general.

In their commentary on the build-up to the Italian war, conservatives emphasised that Austria had her claim to her Italian provinces based on the Treaties of Vienna. Respect for these treaties was the conservatives' primary concern, and they stressed that any change in Italy ought to be 'within the limits of treaties ... [not] in defiance of treaties'.<sup>648</sup> Similarly, from the start of the war until after the peace of Villa-Franca, conservatives argued that any territorial changes consequent to the war would not only negatively impact the balance of power, with Austria weakened, but would moreover entail a repudiation of the Vienna settlement, and thus of the treaty system in general. 'If the arrangements with respect to Italy ... [made in] the treaty of Vienna, can be set aside' without the consent of all the great powers, Tremenheere argued, 'a precedent will be established which must render all treaties illusory and insecure'.<sup>649</sup>

Conservatives placed a high value on respect for existing treaty obligations, on 'the faith of treaties which, if once broken through, must cause incalculable mischief to the tranquillity of Europe'.<sup>650</sup> If the Vienna settlement could be blithely ignored in this one instance, without any negative consequences for the offenders Piedmont and France, then, conservatives expected, other powers would also ignore it whenever this was to their advantage, leading to an international sphere where disputes were mediated only by respect for each other's immediately applicable force – a Europe of instability, disorder, and perennial strife and conflict.

Conservatives identified the principle of nationality as the particular threat to the normative force of the Vienna settlement.<sup>651</sup> British liberal commentators and statesmen seemed to privilege the Italians' sentiment of nationality over the Treaty of Vienna, which implied replacing the Treaty of Vienna with the principle of nationality as

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<sup>646</sup> Cecil (1862: 212-3, 215-7); Patterson (1862a: 338).

<sup>647</sup> See Hicks (2007, especially 13, 34, 207) for an analysis of the central role of the Treaty of Vienna in the foreign policy of Derby and Malmesbury in the conservative governments of the 1850s.

<sup>648</sup> Patterson (1859a: 380). See also Hardman (1859: 623); Patterson (1859a: 378, 391); Swayne (1856: 91).

<sup>649</sup> Tremenheere (1859: 268). See also Aytoun (1860: 248, 252); Forsyth (1861: 171); Oliphant (1860b: 650); Patterson (1859b: 375); (1860: 75); Tremenheere (1859: 266). See also Patterson (1862c: 506), praising Austria and condemning France for their respective adherence to and ignoring of their treaty obligations.

<sup>650</sup> Patterson (1859a: 378). See also Cecil (1859: 24-5); Patterson (1859a: 391-2); (1859b: 375); (1860: 41-51, 63, 75, 129-131); Tremenheere (1859: 267-8).

the ordering principle of Europe. Conservatives reacted by arguing strenuously that liberals had it the wrong way around: the Vienna settlement secured stability, the principle of nationality would only bring disorder. For instance, in an 1862 article ostensibly reviewing a biography of Castlereagh, Cecil defended the Vienna settlement against the attacks of liberal authors like Matthew Arnold. Arnold argued that the treaties of Vienna, 'which took no account of popular ideas', had actually ensured the instability of Europe 'with their arbitrary distribution of the populations of Europe'.<sup>652</sup> If the Vienna settlement had instead based itself on the principle of nationality and acted to create nation-states, then it might have made for a durable settlement.

Cecil vehemently disagreed with Arnold's assessment. He argued that the great powers had successfully 'adjusted their differences at Vienna', 'so secur[ing] lasting peace to Europe'.<sup>653</sup> The aim of the Vienna settlement was to avoid another Great War between the great powers, and in this aim it had succeeded admirably. So, Cecil concluded, the Vienna system of treaty settlements between the great powers worked perfectly fine as the ordering principle of international affairs, and was not to be improved upon.<sup>654</sup> Problems arose only when the domestic affairs of states became an issue in international politics.<sup>655</sup> The principle of nationality, Cecil noted, functioned exactly to bring this pernicious state of affairs about – it made the domestic configuration of states into the ordering principle of international affairs.<sup>656</sup>

By the late 1850s and early 1860s, Cecil had thus become alarmed, like many other conservatives, at the possible disintegration of the Vienna settlement, and its being replaced among some liberals by the self-determination of peoples as the principle which could bring stability to Europe. Conservative observers were of the opinion, as

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<sup>651</sup> See also Chapter 5.

<sup>652</sup> Arnold (1859: 36-7). The actual period of peace Arnold ascribed to the 'weariness of war' after the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars.

<sup>653</sup> Cecil (1862: 212-3).

<sup>654</sup> Cecil (1862: 212-3).

<sup>655</sup> Cecil (1862: 213-7).

<sup>656</sup> Cecil (1862: 235). This argument among liberals and conservatives also sheds some light on the tension in the international order between the ends of 'toleration' (or stability) and 'civilisation', posited by Keene (2002). Keene argues that this tension was resolved by making the first the end of the European order, the second the end of the extra-European order. This holds for the juristic accounts which formed the basis of his study. In journalistic debates over British foreign policy, however, this tension between stability and the progress of civilisation was still present, as is obvious here and in many other instances of debate discussed in this thesis. Cecil argued that the principle of nationality was intolerant of certain states' domestic configuration (not respecting their sovereignty) and thus fomented conflict. His interlocutors could deploy either end in their counterargument: the Treaty of Vienna was intolerant of the wishes of nations (from whence sovereignty gained its legitimacy) and thus fomented conflict, or the application of the principle of nationality and concomitant end of the Vienna settlement were part of the progress of civilisation. Toleration and civilisation were thus still very much in tension in British perspectives on Europe.

argued here by Cecil, that this norm would merely exacerbate existing sources of instability, and remove those supports for European order and stability as still averted a slide into another Great War.

From the early 1860s onward conservatives came to think that the major settlements contained in the Treaty of Vienna had become obsolete. Napoleon III had dissolved the alliances upon which the persistence of the Treaty of Vienna depended and had through his adventures subverted the major particular settlements, not least that of Italy. Conservatives were anxious at this time over the implications for Europe's politics. Patterson expressed this sentiment well: 'Europe is moving onwards into the vortex – into a series of convulsions ... the old treaties are being forced into abeyance; and through new wars Europe is about to grope her way towards a new settlement. The prospect is to be deplored, but it must be faced'.<sup>657</sup> Conservatives thought that the equilibrium of Europe would disappear together with the Vienna settlement. New settlements now needed to be struck and a new understanding between the great powers achieved: 'these events, and the episodes belonging to them', argued Hamley, 'will mould the future of Europe, and influence the character and policy of coming generations'.<sup>658</sup>

What especially concerned conservatives, though, was the possibility that the European order as a whole would break down as 'many separate causes of quarrel ... [were] brought to a head at once'.<sup>659</sup> Patterson argued in 1859 that the 'policy [of Napoleon III] ... places Europe once more in the crucible', adding a year later that 'Europe is being placed bit by bit in the crucible: it remain to be seen whether, however wary the Imperial experimenter, it will not yet slip through his fingers and blaze in one common conflagration'.<sup>660</sup> The metaphor of the crucible used in these phrases sheds further light on the particular perspective of conservatives. Cecil also used it, writing of the ability of statesmen 'to throw Europe into the crucible and to cast her anew on a theoretic pattern'.<sup>661</sup> Conservatives thought of the settlement of Europe as a fixed state of affairs, which could only be changed by being melted down in the conflagration of another Great War, after which the victor could recast Europe into a new order, a new settlement. This metaphor denied the possibility of incremental change, let alone

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<sup>657</sup> Patterson (1864a: 110; see also 114-5); see also Cecil (1864a: 238); Gleig (1866: 652); Lever (1870b: 600-1).

<sup>658</sup> Hamley (1870b: 524); see also (1871c: 506).

<sup>659</sup> Patterson (1864a: 110-1); see also Hamley (1871c: 496); Lever (1870c: 510).

<sup>660</sup> Patterson (1859a: 392); (1860: 129-131).

<sup>661</sup> Cecil (1862: 216).

progressive development on some underlying principle, but rather assumed a general stasis, punctured only by short episodes of vast change which were themselves enabled only through violent disorder and general war, before Europe was “cast anew” and again ordered by a grand settlement.

Quite possibly, conservatives consequently worried, coping with the end of the Vienna settlement would not just come down to adjustments of individual settlements, but rather the European order as a whole would be thrown into doubt, treaties and negotiation would be rejected as viable instruments, and widespread conflict would ensue. During the 1860s, conservatives did not doubt that order and a grand settlement would eventually be achieved, but they also had little doubt that disorder and war would be rife before then.

In reflections on the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war and the Black Sea affair, conservatives evinced their most serious concern over the future of Europe. In placing the Black Sea affair in the context of recent events in European international politics, some conservatives felt compelled to conclude that the established diplomatic order of Europe had been unravelling over the last decade, promising a future of instability and disorder. The main symptom of this decline, they thought, was the lack of respect for the treaties of Europe – the decline of the system, epitomised in the Treaty of Vienna, of sustaining established settlements through their explicit affirmation in treaties.

Conservative authors noted with dismay that over 1870-71 first France and Prussia eagerly went to war with each other, and then both Russia and Prussia each decided just to ignore treaty obligations which did not suit them. These commentators considered this malaise as the flowering of seeds sown a decade earlier. The unification of Italy had involved the widespread denunciation of the Treaty of Vienna, the grand settlement which had for decades buttressed the order of Europe. With this precedent set by France, and applauded by British liberals and radicals, was it any wonder, conservatives noted, that the statesmen of Russia and Prussia felt no obligation to observe far less exalted treaties?<sup>662</sup>

Conservative commentators thought that the general apathy in reaction to Russia’s abrogation of the neutrality of the Black Sea was particularly telling of the little purchase which the treaty system then had on international affairs. They presented the Treaty of Paris as a model of restraint and reasonableness in the settlement of a dispute

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<sup>662</sup> See e.g. Gleig (1866: 652); Lever (1871a: 230).



after war — its provisions, rather than aggrandising the victors, only worked to prevent further aggression. If all states were willing to let a treaty of this particular innocence be ignored, then this, conservatives implied, meant in effect the delegitimisation of all treaties.<sup>663</sup>

In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war and the Black Sea affair, conservative commentators were pessimistic as to the viability of the treaty system and the diplomatic order in general. Unlike in the mid-1860s, conservative commentators no longer had a sense that international politics would move towards a new grand settlement; such settlements had been discarded. Whereas a world ordered by a treaty system, conservatives thought, was at basis orderly and stable, with particular issues being re-settled at particular times, a world without robust treaties would be disorderly and unstable, with all issues in international relations active as potential conflicts all the time.<sup>664</sup> They feared that brute force and frequent war would now become the dominant tenor of international relations.

Conservative commentators such as W.G. Hamley were consequently incredulous that Gladstone could write, in October 1870, that 'a new law of nations is gradually taking hold of the mind, and coming to sway the practice, of the world; a law which recognises independence, which frowns upon aggression, which favours the pacific, not the bloody settlement of disputes'.<sup>665</sup> Gladstone's perspective, Hamley thought, wholly ignored the main recent events in international politics; these events, he argued, 'all indicate ... that material force is resuming its sway over the minds of men, that cunning is before honour'.<sup>666</sup> For Gladstone the unification of Italy and Germany were realisations of the principle of nationality and steps toward the reconfiguration of Europe along morally and providentially prescribed lines. The belligerency of France and Prussia, the secret diplomacy between Prussia and Russia, and the brusque attitude of Russia and the United States towards Britain could be regarded as minor deviations, to be smoothed out by that 'general judgement of civilised mankind'.<sup>667</sup> For conservatives, these events were all part and parcel of the decline of respect for the treaty system of international diplomacy, which had been enshrined in the Treaty of Vienna. As *The Standard* concluded: 'Accustomed as Europe has been of late to witness brute force prevailing over right and law, henceforth all belief in the influence of even

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<sup>663</sup> See e.g. *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 23, p. 4).

<sup>664</sup> *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 28, p. 4); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 17, p. 4); (Nov. 25, p. 4); (Dec. 1, p. 4).

<sup>665</sup> Gladstone (1870: 593).

<sup>666</sup> W.G. Hamley (1871c: 495); see also (1871a: 239-40, 244).

<sup>667</sup> Gladstone (1870: 593).

the most solemn engagements between nations is shattered. The bases of public order and peace are dissolved, and nothing but war remains as the rule between nations.<sup>668</sup>

Exceptionally, at this time, conservative commentators also used the language of morality in connection with respect for treaties. This was unusual: both before and after these years, surrounding even such hot-tempered debates as on the unification of Italy or the Eastern Question, conservatives explicitly cast sustaining respect for the treaty system in terms of interests rather than duty. Only during these years, at time of significant anxiety and whilst holding a bleak view of the immediate future for Britain in Europe, did conservative commentators assert that the decline in respect for treaties was tantamount to a decline in 'the moral sense of the Western nations'.<sup>669</sup> Conservatives certainly considered a lack of respect for treaties as unfortunate, but generally argued that such respect was in the interest of states; they only occasionally scolded states for a moral failing in ignoring their treaty obligations.

While conservatives thus agonised over the demise of the Treaty of Vienna and its effect on European international relations, this anxiety eventually passed. By the second half of the 1870s, during the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78, conservative commentators were more sanguine about the state of Europe.<sup>670</sup> They had come to the conviction that Bismarck was a rational statesman who subscribed to the European order and its benefits and who would seek to sustain it. They now came to assert that, even without a strong respect for treaties under a grand settlement such as the Treaty of Vienna, treaties could still function to make settlements endure. Conservatives no longer invoked the apocalyptic scenarios, of either a general war to establish a new grand settlement or an international politics ruled by brute force and riven with conflict, which they sketched since they first apprehended the obsolescence of the Treaty of Vienna. Order and stability could still be sustained, if now in the particular settlements of individual disputes, rather than through a new grand settlement of Europe. International relations would be less stable than the Treaty of Vienna decades, but would still sustain order and prevent a slide into general aggression and war.

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<sup>668</sup> *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 17, p. 4). See also W.G. Hamley (1871a: 240); (1871c: 495); *The Standard* (1870, Dec. 9, p. 4); (Dec. 14, p. 4). Despite their general sense of unease and their predictions of future instability and disorder, they inferred few explicit practical implications. The one consequence they emphasised was a need for Britain to be better prepared militarily for possible conflict – a need which conservative commentators identified and emphasised at any plausible opportunity.

<sup>669</sup> W.G. Hamley (1871c: 495); see also (1871a: 239-40, 244).

<sup>670</sup> The Whig Henry Reeve drew similarly despairing conclusions from the demise of the Treaty of Vienna, but, in contrast, did not recover his equanimity over the course of the 1870s. See chapter 6.

### The impact of the demise of the Treaty of Vienna on conservative thought

The end of the world as kept in order by the Treaty of Vienna was connected to changes in the conservatives' theory of international relations, but changes of only a limited extent. The shift which took place between the 1850s and the late 1870s in the foreign policy emphasis of conservatives was from the maintenance of the Vienna settlement itself to a more general concern for the stability and order of Europe — a stability which was now not connected to any grand settlement, but to more particular settlements of individual disputes.

In both contexts conservatives thought that order and stability were only to be attained through the assertive engagement of British statesmen with the issues current in international politics. Vigorous action was needed to secure both Britain's interests and the order and stability of Europe — but the context in which Britain was to act had changed, from a more associational politics where the great powers focused on maintaining the established general settlement of Europe, to a more direct focus on dealing with the threats to interests and stability and order involved in a particular dispute. But, as should be clear from the various foregoing analyses of debates, this was merely a difference of degree, not of kind. The Crimean War, for instance, already saw an animated discussion of particular British interests to be furthered and honour to be affirmed, while both the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War and the Eastern Question crisis saw a discussion of the role Britain was to play in maintaining the stability and order and safeguarding the balance of power of Europe.

This thesis hereby contributes to recent developments in the historiography of the high politics of Conservative foreign policy in Victorian Britain. This latter scholarship revolves around a welcome focus on the reality of Conservative statesmen's foreign policy — particularly that of the Derbys and Malmesbury from the 1840s to the early 1870s.<sup>671</sup> It rightly assigns to the periphery anecdotes about Disraeli's flamboyant initiatives, which had previously received disproportionate attention. The difference in demeanour between the foreign policy of the Derbys during the 1850s and 1860s, and Disraeli in the late 1870s, leads these scholars to posit the existence of two distinct traditions of Conservative foreign policy: a Derbyite tradition which more or less concerned itself with order and stability, and a Disraelian tradition which roughly favoured prestige and the grand gesture under the guise of sustaining the balance of

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<sup>671</sup> Charmley (2003); Hicks (2004); (2007a); (2007b); (2012); and the essays in Hicks (ed.) (2011a).

power.<sup>672</sup> They suggest that the Derbyite tradition had been the natural conservative position, but that it had been displaced by Disraeli's newfangled flamboyance and marginalised ever since.

While Hicks and others are right to stress the differences in temperaments of the Derbys and Disraeli and its influence of the high politics of foreign policy, their subsequent postulation of distinct ways of thinking about international politics in the conservative tradition is perhaps a bit too ambitious a claim.

This thesis shows that there was, at least among conservative members of the metropolitan educated class, a fundamental continuity of perspective on international relations from the early 1850s until the late 1870s. Most tellingly, the notions emphasised by Disraeli, such as the importance of an assertive foreign policy and of Britain's honour or stature, were actually not novel at all — they had been prominent concerns of conservative commentators since at least the Crimean War and were an integral part of their worldview. The Derbys meanwhile reflected another major part of the conservative world-view, in their concern over stability and order.

The impression of a major change in traditions from the 1860s to 1870s is the result of a change in the perspectives held by the major actors of conservative high politics, combined with changes in the reality of European politics. The preponderance of the Derbys and their focus on stability and order gave way to that of Disraeli with his focus on honour and vigour, at the same time as the focus of European politics shifted from the established settlement of the Treaty of Vienna to the assertion of interests in particular disputes.

The possibility of a major change in the conservative worldview effected in these decades is a plausible enough assumption when one studies the high politics of the period, but this thesis argues that an analysis of a wider body of conservative commentary shows that the conservative theory of international politics in fact remained remarkably constant. The difference was that conservative commentators recognised the Treaty of Vienna as a viable instrument through which to pursue both order and stability and the interests of Britain only until the early 1860s. After that time, conservatives came to think they needed to utilise other means to secure their ends, and the same theory of international politics which in the context of the 1840s and 1850s had implied a foreign policy focused primarily on maintaining the Treaty settlement,

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<sup>672</sup> Charmley (1999: 7, 16, 22, 53, 79, 81, 90, 103, 152, 195); (2003); (2011: 216-7, 223-5); Grosvenor (2011: 130, 138); Hicks (2007a: 206, 218, 238); (2011b: 13-15); with Otte (2011) expressing scepticism regarding the existence of two different traditions.

implied in the 1860s and 1870s a foreign policy which focused first of all on the vigorous assertion of British interests in the contexts of particular disputes. Rather than securing British interests and European order through the maintenance of one grand treaty, conservatives thought that Britain now needed to secure interests and order one dispute and settlement at a time.

#### Treaties and the role of force

Conservative thought on international order had changed with the demise of the Treaty of Vienna, but in the end they could adapt relatively easily, because of their notion that international law was not part of a different order, but still enmeshed in a world of force. This section expands on that aspect of their understanding of the workings of treaties, and starts the shift from talking about international order and stability to talking about the balance of power and its role in international relations. Conservative commentary showed their ambivalence towards treaties and the treaty system; on the one hand they valued this system as a constraint on power politics, and they worried about its perceived demise, while on the other hand they subsumed treaties and the treaty system, in their particular analyses, under the basic dynamics of the balance of power.

Conservatives thought that the salience of treaties wholly depended on power, on states having the willingness and ability to enforce the treaties. Statesmen would not feel morally bound to keep their treaty obligations. Treaties were codified settlements, and consequently forced states to compromise their interests. A state would only be willing to do so, conservatives asserted, as long as it thought that other states would use force to sustain this compromise. 'It is only natural, as well as an established fact,' Patterson observed, 'that the Power upon whom a treaty has been imposed, seeks the first opportunity of shaking off its obligations'.<sup>673</sup> The purchase of treaty obligations on statesmen rested, conservatives thought, on the likelihood that transgressions would be rectified.<sup>674</sup>

Conservatives thought that the peace treaty concluding the Crimean War with Russia was particularly problematic in this sense. Establishing the peace settlement had required a coalition of Britain and France, and it was all too likely that the interests of

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<sup>673</sup> Patterson (1856a: 615).

<sup>674</sup> Cecil (1864a: 270); Dalrymple (1871: 965); *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 16, p. 4); Manners (1871: 944-6); Oliphant (1865: 128); Patterson (1864b: 641); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 15, p. 4); (Nov. 19, p. 4); (Dec. 14, p. 4); (Dec. 15, p. 4); (Dec. 19, p. 4).

these states would diverge in the future, creating a situation where they would not be willing or able to join together again to coerce Russia and enforce the treaty – at which point, conservatives thought, Russia could be expected to promptly rescind it, raising the Eastern Question once more.<sup>675</sup>

During the debates surrounding the unification of Italy, conservatives worried whether the Treaty of Vienna was still sufficiently buttressed by force. The concern besetting conservatives was that with the Italian episode Europe had arrived at a state of affairs where one great power, France, was actively trying to dismantle the Vienna settlement; another, Russia, was willing to let this happen; while a third, Britain, seemed to lack the vigour and decisiveness needed to form a coalition of powers committed to preserving the Vienna settlement.<sup>676</sup>

This primacy of force also came to the fore in conservatives' argument on Britain's legal disputes with the North during the American civil war. Discussing the Trent affair, Forsyth asserted that power, not legal detail, was where the crux of the matter lay: 'The case in fact lies in a nutshell. *We claim for our flag the right* to cover with its protection all persons found under it ... The moral support which Great Britain has received from the other European Powers in this dispute is without parallel'.<sup>677</sup> What mattered was not some general injunction of an abstract international law, but that powerful Britain made a particular claim for itself, asserted a certain right, and was backed up in this by the other great powers of Europe. The North did not have the letter of the law on its side, Forsyth argued, but even if it did, he continued, the more pertinent fact was that its actions conflicted with the British interpretation of the law, and that this British interpretation was shared by the other great powers. Rules were only viable as long as there was a willingness and ability to enforce them – after all, conservatives argued, it had been the threat of force, not the legalities involved, which had made the North reconsider and release their prisoners<sup>678</sup> – and by extension, force determined in the end the practical meaning of the rules.

The aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war further proved, in the minds of conservatives, the dependence of treaties on a will and ability to enforce them. The collapse of French power had suddenly made such enforcement unlikely for several established settlements. Hence, conservatives argued, Russia's rejection of the Black Sea

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<sup>675</sup> Aytoun (1854: 613); Cecil (1855: 1601-4); Disraeli (1855: 1736); Patterson (1856a: 611, 613, 620-1).

<sup>676</sup> Aytoun (1860: 247, 253); Cecil (1859: 28); Forsyth (1861: 176-7); Patterson (1859b: 380-1); (1860: 129-131); (1862b: 255); Swayne (1859: 757); Tremeneere (1859: 267-8).

<sup>677</sup> Forsyth (1862: 268-70, see also 265-6), emphasis mine. See also e.g. Beresford Hope (1862: 42).

<sup>678</sup> Beresford Hope (1862: 42); Forsyth (1862: 274); Hamley (1863b: 638-9).

clauses and Italy's usurpation of the temporal power of the Pope.<sup>679</sup> As *The Standard* noted regarding the Treaty of Paris: 'If England and France will not fight to maintain the stipulations of the treaty, Russia may treat that great European act as waste paper'.<sup>680</sup> Russia saw hostile France powerless, friendly Prussia the dominant power on the continent, and calculated that, Gladstone being in power in Britain, there existed neither the will nor the ability among its signatories to sustain the Treaty of Paris by force – so Russia promptly repudiated it.<sup>681</sup>

Conservatives' thoughts on treaties were consequently rather ambivalent. 'They desired to uphold treaties' de jure permanent validity while acknowledging that treaties' de facto impermanence was natural and inevitable. They argued for the importance of general respect for the treaty system, and agonised about the consequences of the seeming decline of this respect — and meanwhile, in their particular analyses they invariably argued that what sustained a treaty was the potential application of military force in defence of its protocols. Indeed, they then broadened this analysis to argue that stability and order in Europe could only be secured through a general balance of power between the great powers.

### **The balance of power as the principle ordering international relations**

Conservatives thought of the balance of power as the final security against their two main concerns in international politics: the possibilities of general war and universal dominion. The balance of power helped to prevent a state of perennial dispute and conflict which would quickly lead to the outbreak of another Great War and it stopped any state establishing itself as hegemon of Europe, impinging on the independence of the great powers. Conservatives used the concept of a balance of power in two senses, imagined both as a general feature of the European sphere and as a particular state of affairs in this sphere. In different contexts, the balance of power could consequently be 'adjusted' or 'secured'.<sup>682</sup>

As a general feature of Europe, the balance of power, in the minds of conservatives, meant the state of relations among the great powers. The great powers would each have the capability to project a certain amount of power – their ability and

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<sup>679</sup> Gleig (1866: 652); Hamley (1870c: 789); (1871c: 495-6, 506); Lever (1871a: 230, 233).

<sup>680</sup> *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 16, p. 4).

<sup>681</sup> Dasent (1870: 316); *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 17, p. 4); (Nov. 21, p. 4); W.G. Hamley (1870c: 789); Lever (1871a: 233); Manners (1871: 944-6); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 15, p. 4); (Nov. 16, p. 4); (Dec. 14, p. 4); (Dec. 15, p. 4);

<sup>682</sup> Cecil (1864a: 238) and Hamley (1871c: 496). See also Dasent (1870: 295); Gleig (1870a: 656); Wilson

willingness to use force – and they would have certain relationships with each other – antagonism or cooperation over particular issues, and alienation or alliances between the statesmen in general. Through a 'calculation' of these different elements statesmen gained a sense of the balance of power in Europe, the particular distribution of power and ability to act among the great powers.<sup>683</sup>

Conservatives often, though, used the concept in a second sense, to describe a discrete state of affairs. In this sense, power in Europe – among the great powers – was either balanced, or not. The balance which conservatives imagined was not one of equal measures of power among the great powers, or even of roughly equal alliances arraigned opposite each other. Balance did not mean positive equality, it meant absence of a particular state of excessive inequality. Conservatives thought that there existed a balance of power if no great power had achieved such a predominant position, through its ability to use force and relations with other states, that it could assert its interests at will.<sup>684</sup> The balance of power consequently existed primarily in the recognition by every great power that if it were to try and use force to adjust the major settlements of Europe in its favour, it would be stopped by the other great powers.<sup>685</sup>

While conservatives often wrote of the balance of power of Europe, they generally narrowed their sense of scope in particular analyses, to the balance between certain great powers in a particular region. The general notion of a European balance of power certainly had meaning — conservatives were for instance alarmed by the changed balance of power after the upheaval caused by France's defeat and Prussia's ascendancy in a united Germany in the Franco-Prussian war — but even in this case such a lack of balance had effect in the more local equilibria which it upset, such as that sustaining the neutrality of the Black Sea. Conservatives' anchoring of the general balance of power of Europe in local equilibria was especially evident in their commentary on the Crimean War and the Eastern Question crisis.

Conservatives argued that the Crimean War needed to be fought to preserve the balance of power of Europe. At the same time, they equated this result not with a general diminishing of Russian power, but with safeguards in one particular locale only. Securing the European balance of power meant, in effect, enforcing a stable equilibrium between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, by obviating the possibility of Russian

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(1870: 388).

<sup>683</sup> Cecil (1870: 540); see also Cecil (1871: 256); Oliphant (1864a: 389); (1864b: 506).

<sup>684</sup> Cecil (1864a: 251); Hamley (1870c: 789); (1871c: 505-6); Oliphant (1864a: 386); Wilson (1870: 388).

<sup>685</sup> Cecil (1864a: 287); (1870: 546-7, 556); Hamley, E.B. (1866: 247); Hamley (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 495-6, 504); Wilson (1870: 380, 391-2).



aggrandisement in the region. They consequently thought that the destruction of Russia's Black Sea fleet and its military port at Sebastopol were rightly the main focus of the British and French war effort.<sup>686</sup> Finances were Russia's weakest point; the destruction of its relevant expensive capital goods – its ships, ports, and fortresses on the Black Sea – would consequently do most to secure the balance of power.<sup>687</sup>

During the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78, as in the Crimean War, conservatives focused on a balance in the particular region, rather than a balance of military power as such. Cowell for instance asserted that there was no need for Russia to be 'suppressed ... [and] shattered to pieces'; rather, it would be enough to 'counterbalance that [Russian] influence'.<sup>688</sup> Conservative commentators further remarked that there was no possibility of a balance of power as long as Austria and Germany failed to cooperate in 'decisive action' to counterbalance Russia in South-Eastern Europe.<sup>689</sup> Only when Germany and Austria formed an alliance around the time of the Congress was the balance of power in the area restored.<sup>690</sup> Conservatives understood the balance of power as a constant, localised balancing between the great powers whose interests were involved in the particular dispute.

#### The balance of power - securing general stability

Conservatives thought that the overall order and stability of Europe depended on the durable settlement between great powers of the major issues of international politics.<sup>691</sup> The likelihood that a particular settlement would again become contested depended not just on developments intrinsic to the issue, but also on developments in the relations between great powers in general. The order and stability of Europe were based on the existence of an equilibrium, a balance of power between the great powers. Conservatives initially conceived the balance of power of doing so by sustaining the Treaty of Vienna; after the latter's demise they argued the balance of power sustained

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<sup>686</sup> Disraeli (1855: 1731, 1735); E.B. Hamley (1855c: 353); (1855i: 260); (1855k: 627); Lytton (1855: 1381-3); Northcote (1855: 1442); Patterson (1855b: 241-2); (1855c: 632); Oliphant (1856: 485). See also Disraeli in Baumgart (1981: 191). See further e.g. Disraeli (1855: 1737-8) and Hardman (1858) discussing the future of the Principalities, and Oliphant (1856) and Swayne (1855b) discussing the Caucasus.

<sup>687</sup> Aytoun (1854: 608-11, 615); C. Hamley (1855c: 428, 433); E.B. Hamley (1855i: 260); Lytton (1855: 1391-2); Swayne (1855a: 111).

<sup>688</sup> Cowell (1878h: 254-5).

<sup>689</sup> Cowell (1876a: 86-7); see also Cowell (1878h: 251-5); Hamley (1877a: 749); Smith and Layard (1877: 279-80, 294).

<sup>690</sup> Courthope (1880: 566-7); Cowell (1878k: 760)

<sup>691</sup> Cecil (1864a: 279-80, 287); (1870: 546-7, 556); Hamley, E.B. (1866: 247); Hamley (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 495-6, 504); Lever (1870b: 600-1); (1871a: 230-2); Patterson (1864a: 110-1); Wilson (1870: 380, 391-2); (1871b: 366).

the diplomatic order in general. Conservatives thought that an associational balance of power was needed to uphold the Treaty of Vienna and its settlement of Europe. Only an alliance of states willing to pool their forces with the aim of maintaining the Treaty could secure this settlement.<sup>692</sup> In contrast, their later conception of order and stability sprouting from individual settlements could function in context of adversarial balance-of-power politics, too. The conservatives' understanding of great power politics and the European order was thus wrapped up in these two concepts of equilibrium and the balance of power, each with multiple connotations.

Conservatives talked about equilibrium as something that pertained to Europe – 'the European equilibrium' or 'the equilibrium of Europe' – and that could be 'unsettled' and 'restored'.<sup>693</sup> A state of equilibrium first of all meant stability, a sense that the major settlements between the great powers were secure and enduring.<sup>694</sup> As Hamley explained, while equilibrium existed 'the nations dozed pleasantly', merely concerned with increasing their prosperity.<sup>695</sup> Equilibrium would exist when the settlements between the great powers adequately reflected their respective willingness and ability to use force over the issue.

Equilibrium was equated with a particular balance of power – one where power was indeed balanced.<sup>696</sup> Equilibrium was impossible if there were no balance of power; if a great power achieved a position in which it no longer feared reprisals by other great powers for its actions. If given such an opportunity to remould existing settlements with little chance of censure, the statesmen of a great power would, conservatives thought, be tempted to do so. The major settlements would again become issues of dispute. Thereby the equilibrium of Europe would be unsettled, and, if this course of action went unchecked, possibly be shattered.<sup>697</sup>

Conservatives observed this link between the balance of power and the order and stability of Europe most closely in 1870-71. First had come a major upset of the balance of power, as French power fell away and Prussia ascended in leadership of united Germany. Then, with Italy annexing the Papal States and Russia abrogating the neutrality of the Black Sea, came the disorder and disputes — such 'barefaced robbery' — which could be expected to follow the absence of a balance of power, as states

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<sup>692</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1859: 28); Patterson (1860: 101).

<sup>693</sup> Cecil (1864a: 280); (1870: 540); (1871: 256); Hamley (1870c: 789); (1871a: 247-8).

<sup>694</sup> Oliphant (1865: 118, 130); Patterson (1864a: 110).

<sup>695</sup> Hamley (1870a: 384).

<sup>696</sup> Cecil (1870: 540); (1871: 256); Hamley (1870c: 789); (1871c: 505-6).

<sup>697</sup> Cecil (1864a: 284-5); (1870: 556); Lever (1870b: 600-1).

attempted to change existing settlements to their favour.<sup>698</sup>

Conservative commentators predicted that the actions of Russia and Italy were but the first of many such. They wondered whether statesmen would start to lose their confidence in the world of diplomacy, with not only these settlements being revised unilaterally, but also Prussian statesmen making secret agreements and plots.<sup>699</sup> Indeed, conservatives thought that the diplomatic order itself depended on the balance of power. Statesmen could only be trusted in their commitments if they were convinced they would in the end not be able to renege on these commitments. This conviction disappeared, conservatives thought, once the balance of power was gone, and consequently trust and confidence became impossible. 'Until equilibrium is restored', Hamley lamented, 'there can no longer be belief in assurances or treaties'.<sup>700</sup> All that was left as a means in international politics was the actual use of force. International politics would turn into a 'general scramble', involving the widespread use of force.<sup>701</sup>

Conservatives presented the behaviour of the American North as a confirmation of their assumption that the balance of power made for a civilised international politics. Hamley argued that 'the main source of the less pleasing points of American character has been their undisputed supremacy on that great continent. Amongst the great powers of Europe courtesy and forbearance have become essential attributes of their constant intercourse' – they generally adhered to the conventions of the existing diplomatic order.<sup>702</sup> America, in contrast, was 'exposed to none of the vicissitudes and contests that keep the kingdoms of Europe on their guard', not being a part of the European military sphere.<sup>703</sup> Americans consequently had nothing but 'contempt', Forsyth concluded, 'for many of the rules which regulate the intercourse of the old monarchies of Europe'.<sup>704</sup> Only after the expected secession of the South would American statesmen 'be infinitely more agreeable than before. The salutary check of a neighbour who may become an enemy, will produce there, as in Europe, a courteous and considerate diplomacy'.<sup>705</sup> Conservatives thought that only because a state was

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<sup>698</sup> Hamley (1871c: 505-6). See also Dasent (1870: 316); *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 17, p. 4); (Nov. 21, p. 4); W.G. Hamley (1870c: 789); Lever (1871a: 230, 233); (1871f: 729); Manners (1871: 944-6); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 15, p. 4); (Nov. 16, p. 4); (Dec. 14, p. 4); (Dec. 15, p. 4);

<sup>699</sup> Lever (1871a: 230-2); (1871f: 728).

<sup>700</sup> Hamley (1871c: 496); see also Lever (1871a: 230-2); Wilson (1871b: 366).

<sup>701</sup> See e.g. Dasent (1870: 316). See also Cecil (1864a: 279-80); Lever (1870b: 600-1); Patterson (1864a: 110-1).

<sup>702</sup> Hamley (1861a: 129-30).

<sup>703</sup> Hamley (1861a: 127), see also (1862d: 382).

<sup>704</sup> Hamley (1861a: 129) and Forsyth (1862: 274-5).

<sup>705</sup> Hamley (1861a: 130). See also Beresford Hope (1862: 37, 87, 108-9, 115-6); Cecil (1861: 282-3); Hamley (1861b: 404); Spence (1861: 315-6); Wolseley (1863: 24-5). Some pro-south liberals used similar

subject to a balance of power, did it follow the rules of the diplomatic order.

In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war and the Black Sea affair, conservatives observed that Europe's international relations would be fraught with instability until either France managed to regain something of her former position, or Britain were to show leadership and take on an assertive role, exerting herself to restore balance to Europe's international sphere.<sup>706</sup> They argued that these events were a strong counter-example against those people who thought that the notion of the balance of power was obsolete and ought to be abandoned. Events had confirmed the balance of power, conservatives asserted, both as an analytical perspective through which to understand the course of events, and as a necessary condition for peace and stability in international politics.

#### The balance of power – preventing hegemony

Conservatives thought that the balance of power, as well as enabling stability and order, was necessary to stop any state establishing itself as hegemon of Europe. If there was a balance of power, then rather than one state dominating international relations, all the great powers had influence on affairs and could foster their interests. Conservatives generally assumed that, if a great power were to make a bid for hegemony, a coalition would arise sooner or later to restore the balance of power. For statesmen to secure the balance of power, Hamley argued, meant that they 'would have ready some plan of joint action against a possible time of jeopardy', 'to check the inroads of tyrannous power, if such should attempt to dominate'.<sup>707</sup> In their occasional exhortations for Britain to form such a coalition, they hoped to pre-empt other states making such a bid in the first place, avoiding the major war which would otherwise be needed to stop them. The balance of power consequently functioned primarily in the recognition by all the great powers that if they were to try and use force to adjust the major settlements of Europe in their favour, they would be checked by the other great powers.<sup>708</sup> Securing the balance of power so as to prevent a bid for hegemony was a major strand of conservative commentary on the Crimean War and Eastern Question, and in the aftermath of the unifications of Italy and Germany.

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arguments, see e.g. Bagehot in Clinton (2003: 91) and Varouxakis (2002a: 10).

<sup>706</sup> Dasent (1870: 316); *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 19, p. 4); (Nov. 21, p. 4); W.G. Hamley (1870c: 789); (1871a: 244); *The Standard* (1870, Nov. 17, p. 4); (Dec. 14, p. 4); (Dec. 15, p. 4);

<sup>707</sup> Hamley (1871c: 496).

<sup>708</sup> Cecil (1864a: 287); (1870: 546-7, 556); Hamley, E.B. (1866: 247); Hamley (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 495-6, 504); Wilson (1870: 380, 391-2).

The primary aim of the Crimean war, conservatives thought, was to stop Russia's bid for hegemony over Eastern Europe. Conservatives argued that the balance of power would collapse if Russia were allowed to conquer the Ottoman Empire's European provinces; Russia would gain unassailable military leverage over central Europe, acquire preponderant influence over these states, and, while not threatening French and British independence directly, would no longer need to concern itself with their wishes and concerns — Russia would in effect be the only remaining great power of Europe.<sup>709</sup> Conservatives thought that the threat of Russian hegemony justified, even compelled, Britain and France to confront Russia and to go to war over the issue if necessary. Peace was valuable, but only with a balance of power in Europe could there be a true peace, with independence for all countries — 'a calm which falls like quiet sunshine all over Europe, and allows each nation to develop its powers in its own way'.<sup>710</sup>

In their reflections on the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78 conservatives again characterised Russia as having the long-term goal of 'establishing Russian supremacy in Europe' through its 'schemes of vast and even universal empire'.<sup>711</sup> Conservatives consequently presented Russian aggression as a threat to 'the independence and liberties of the world' and called upon Britain and the rest of Europe to join together to '[defend] the cause of freedom and civilisation' and be the 'champion of European liberty' — understood as the independence of the established states of Europe from domination by a hegemonic state.<sup>712</sup>

Over the course of the unification of Italy, conservative commentators argued that these events should be placed in the context of a likely grand French project of aggrandisement.<sup>713</sup> Patterson in particular argued that Napoleon III 'aims to attain for her [France] the position of despotic arbiter in the affairs of Europe'.<sup>714</sup> Conservatives consequently exhorted Britain to act assertively to check France in its possible bid for

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<sup>709</sup> Cecil (1855: 1601-2); Disraeli (1855: 1733, 1737-8); Elwin (1854: 298-9); E.B. Hamley (1855c: 353); (1855i: 261); (1856a: 241); Hardman (1858: 85); Libri and Guizot (1855: 494, 499-500); Lytton (1855: 1379, 90-1); Patterson (1855c: 634-5, 637, 642-4); (1856a: 611, 615, 620); Swayne (1854a: 592); (1855c: 335). See also Disraeli in Baumgart (1981: 191).

<sup>710</sup> Patterson (1855c: 635).

<sup>711</sup> Keppel (1878: 536) and Smith and Layard (1877: 302-3). See also Craik and Smith (1877: 299); Patterson (1878: 486, 498); Russell (1877: 240).

<sup>712</sup> Respectively Craik and Smith (1877: 307); Keppel (1878: 568-70). See also Russell (1877: 212). Conservatives here emphatically did not use liberty and independence to refer to the cause of oppressed nationalities, as liberals were wont to do.

<sup>713</sup> Aytoun (1860: 245, 247, 252); Cecil (1859: 1); Forsyth (1861: 173-5); Oliphant (1860b: 649-50); (1860c: 740); Patterson (1859a: 390); (1859b: 375, 379); (1860: 63, 69-74, 80-83, 90-1, 107-8, 112, 125-6); (1862b: 260); (1862c: 518); Stanley (1861: 165, 177).

<sup>714</sup> Patterson (1859a: 382).

hegemony. If the aims of Napoleon III were the aims of Napoleon I, then of course, conservatives implied through this analogy, British policy too ought to take its cue from the victorious British who had dealt with the first Napoleon. Whereas many liberal commentators at this time favoured an alliance with France in support of liberal values across Europe, conservatives argued that Britain ought to establish a coalition to oppose France, in order to pre-empt a possible French bid for hegemony and maintain the balance of power in Europe.<sup>715</sup>

Not every war disturbed the balance of power or threatened to shatter the equilibrium of Europe. During the events of the mid-1860s, such as the Danish Duchies affair and the 1866 Prussian war with Austria, conservatives did not perceive the European order as being under threat – 'it is not without anxiety, though without alarm, that we look forward to the events of the year', wrote Patterson in 1864.<sup>716</sup> But whatever might have been their reactions in the 1860s, after the Franco-Prussian war, conservatives did think that the European order was in peril. The balance of power had been lost with the collapse of French power, the collusion of Russia and Prussia, and the isolation of Britain. Prussia was now in a position where it might indeed feel untouchable, free to embark on a course of conquest with minimal immediate opposition from the rest of Europe. Hence the importance which conservatives ascribed to the attitude which the Prussian statesmen would take.<sup>717</sup> This was not a matter, conservatives argued, which Britain ought to leave to chance, but currently it did so.

Conservatives consequently thought it crucial to secure at least the possibility of a balance of power, after which equilibrium and a confidence in the European order could slowly return, even if, as Hamley predicted, 'to restore equilibrium will be a difficult and possibly a bloody task'.<sup>718</sup> Redressing any of three issues would suffice, conservatives thought, to restore a balance to the extent that the Prussian statesmen would consider reprisals too likely and would not adopt an aggressive attitude. Enough of a balance of power would be achieved if either France was restored to strength – but this was the business of years and would consequently take too long; if the relationship

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<sup>715</sup> Patterson (1860: 12). See also e.g. Cecil (1859: 23-30); Patterson (1859b: 385); (1860: 41-51, 124-5, 129-31).

<sup>716</sup> Patterson (1864a: 132).

<sup>717</sup> Cecil (1870: 545-6, 554-6); Dasent (1870: 295); Lever (1871d: 370); Wilson (1870: 391-2); (1871a: 91-2); (1871b: 369-70).

<sup>718</sup> Hamley (1870c: 789).

between Russia and Prussia was based in antagonism rather than collusion<sup>719</sup> – conservatives considered the breakdown of cooperation likely sooner or later, but argued that it could not be counted upon, as both sides still gained from their relationship at the moment; or finally if Britain would organise a coalition with the weaker states of Europe as a potential counterweight to an aggressive Prussia. Conservatives argued for the assertive leadership of Britain in European politics as the best means to secure a balance of power and prevent Prussia from making a bid for hegemony.<sup>720</sup>

#### Nationalist justifications for annexation: the balance of power at stake

By the 1870s, the familiar threat of a state's desire for hegemony to the balance of power was joined in conservative commentary by a new and similarly threatening desire of states and peoples, for pan-ethnic unity. When discussing Germany's possible bid for hegemony in 1870-71 and Russia's aggression in 1876-78, conservatives commented on the Pan-Teutonic and Pan-Slavic sentiment which helped to drive this desire for aggrandisement forward.

From the perspective of conservative commentators a nationalist desire for pan-ethnic unity was a threat similar to the desire for hegemony. In both cases foreign policy was made not to further limited interests, but rather as part of a grand emotive project. And, conservatives noted, given the expansive definitions which were often given to the extent of the ethnicity, the two projects were all but indistinguishable in practice. Wilson explicitly remarked that the exhortations in German debates for Germany to rule 'wherever any vestige of that nationality is extant' were in effect 'German claims to something like universal dominion'.<sup>721</sup> Both pan-ethnic unity and universal dominion implied the creation of a vast empire through a series of major wars, resulting in the absence of any semblance of a balance of power in Europe.<sup>722</sup> Conservative commentators seldom seriously mooted the possibility of Britain being invaded, let alone conquered — what they did fear was another major war ending with Britain no longer being a great power of the first rank. This was the threat which German and

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<sup>719</sup> Liberals, in contrast with conservatives, thought after the Franco-Prussian war that 'peace depended on good relations between Germany and Russia' (Parry 2006: 286).

<sup>720</sup> Cecil (1870: 553, 556); Dasent (1870: 313-4, 327); Gleig (1870a: 656); (1870b: 662); Hamley (1870c: 785, 789); (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 496, 504, 506); Wilson (1871b: 372).

<sup>721</sup> Wilson (1871a: 87-8). See also Cecil (1870: 551-2, 555-6); Dasent (1870: 312-3); Wilson (1871b: 359-60).

<sup>722</sup> Cowell (1876b: 253); Craik and Smith (1877: 307); Hamley (1878b: 242); Kinglake and Austin (1880: 526-7, 536-7, 541; Shand (1878: 739).

Russian visions of a grand Teutonic or Slav empire held, just as surely as the Spanish and French desires for universal dominion had done in yesteryear.

Conservatives not only considered the *sentiment* of nationality to be a problem because it enjoined extensive conquests which would destroy the balance of power. They also argued that the *principle* of nationality was problematic, because it undermined the legitimacy as well as the reality of the balance of power, by being proposed as an alternative ordering of European politics. In this context, a leader writer for *The Globe* argued that settlements based on interests and power, and a balance of power sustaining the treaties enshrining these settlements, was still the best way to organise the international sphere. He set the balance of power off against the preferred organising principle of many of its detractors: the principle of nationality. These detractors argued, the author stated, that a balance of power could and should not be maintained, since it involved infringing on the principle of nationality. It was fine to prevent one state from becoming too powerful when this power was 'attained by the forcible annexation of alien races', but no longer now that such power 'is acquired by the natural concretion of kindred ones'.<sup>723</sup> The ethical principle of nationality trumped the pragmatic consideration of the balance of power.

The *Globe's* author was willing to concede this point initially, for the sake of argument. 'But', he continued, 'what then? What is to prevent an empire of race from becoming an empire of conquest?' Once a state had become the dominant power through national accretion, there would be no barrier left to stop it from expanding further and conquering its neighbouring small, independent states. And, the author noted, there was every reason to assume such a development: 'We shall be told, of course, that we start from a mistake, because empires founded on nationality will respect nationality in others. But that is the purest assumption. Is it not characteristic of dominant races to assume they have missions?'<sup>724</sup> Allowing the principle of nationality to trump the balance of power – not stopping a state from expanding into a position of continental dominance, when such an expansion came through national accretion – would finally allow that old bugbear of European politics, a hegemonic state bent on universal dominion, to be realised. And what the organising principle of international relations should first of all provide, the author argued, was 'security for the peace of the world [and] the liberty of nations [i.e. states]'.<sup>725</sup> The balance of power, conservatives

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<sup>723</sup> *Globe* (1870, Nov. 21, p. 4).

<sup>724</sup> *Globe* (1870, Nov. 21, p. 4).

<sup>725</sup> *The Globe* (1870, Nov. 21, p. 4).



observed, had always secured Europe against both general war and universal dominion, and was still Europe's best guarantee of order, stability, and independence.

### **Conclusion**

The notion of a balance of power was central to conservatives' conceptualisations of international relations. Above all, it allowed them to cope with their two main worries regarding European politics: a descent into general war and the rise of a hegemonic great power. The balance of power was by definition a guarantee against the latter, and also worked to prevent the former, by allowing statesmen to put their faith in a diplomatic order based on settlements encoded in treaties. The demise of the Treaty of Vienna alarmed many conservative commentators, who feared an international relations of unfettered force. However, their commitment to the notion of the balance of power allowed them to eventually envisage an orderly and stable Europe which rested no longer on one grand settlement, but on treaties codifying settlements of individual disputes — treaties whose purchase was in the end buttressed by a balance of power in Europe. The main threat to the European order was now not a king desiring universal dominion, but the transformative and normative force of the sentiment and the principle of nationality.

## V. Nationality and International Relations

The “principle of nationality” featured prominently in liberals' analyses of international affairs. This chapter analyses conservative thought on nationality, and thereby shows how conservative thought was distinctive with regards to one of the main ontological and normative commitments of Victorian liberal international thought. The chapter contributes six insights regarding the role which notions of nationality played in conservative analyses. Firstly, conservatives accorded a relatively minor role to the idea of national character in making sense of international politics. Secondly, they spoke of the sentiment rather than the principle of nationality, with its referent lying in the imagination rather than in reality. Thirdly, conservatives did not consider national sentiment to be the main driving force behind the unifications of Italy and Germany. Fourthly, they argued that notions of nationality had led to an increase in aggression in international politics. Fifthly, they rejected the normative principle of nationality. Sixthly and finally, conservatives argued that the sentiment of nationality jeopardised the values of liberty and patriotism, and ought to be renounced. But first, to provide the necessary context for the discussion of conservative thought, the chapter starts off with a succinct description of the role of the concept of nationality in the thought of the conservatives' liberal interlocutors.

### **The conservatives' liberal interlocutors and nationality**

This brief discussion of the role of the idea of nationality in liberal thought had best start with the notion of patriotism. As Varouxakis has argued convincingly, Victorian thinkers assumed the necessity of a sense of patriotism among a people – a love of one's country and a pride in its exemplary institutions, traditions, or convictions. The concept was generally affirmed, while at the same time its exact meaning was 'highly contested', with authors distinguishing between 'commendable ... [and] reprehensible form[s]' of patriotism.<sup>726</sup> Liberal thinkers often employed notions of nationality when elaborating on the proper meaning of patriotism, resulting in a language in which patriotism and nationalism were not clearly distinguished.<sup>727</sup>

Victorian liberal thinkers assumed the existence of a national community with a national character.<sup>728</sup> Liberals advocated a patriotic pride not in institutions per se, but in

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<sup>726</sup> Varouxakis (2006b: 114).

<sup>727</sup> Varouxakis (2006b: 112-3). As discussed in the final section of this chapter, conservatives were at pains to point out how the two could come into conflict.

<sup>728</sup> See e.g. Jones (2006: 16-9); Parry (2006: 245-6, 251-2); Romani (2002); Varouxakis (1998: 376); (2006b:

that these furthered certain universal ideals and signified certain admirable traits of the national character.<sup>729</sup> Love of country now implied love of nation, too. In addition, these liberals had a strong concern for the general progress of mankind. Liberals consequently distinguished between an exclusive pride in the traits and achievements of the country, which they rejected, and an admirable pride in the nation (and its improvement) as subsumed in a concern for mankind (and its progress) in general.<sup>730</sup>

Victorian thinkers shared not only a general affirmation of patriotism, but also the notion that patriotism was a necessary principle of social cohesion. Where they differed was as to what this cohesion consisted in. Liberals perceived the principle of cohesion of society as present among the population, which was to 'feel that they are one people', a national community with a national character.<sup>731</sup> For conservatives, in contrast, cohesion lay not in a shared identity, but rather in a shared patriotic pride in certain institutions. People all had a vertical relationship with certain institutions, such as the Crown and the Empire, rather than a horizontal relationship with one another.<sup>732</sup>

Notions of nationality, especially that of national character, were of central importance to the attempts of liberals to make sense of their world. Varouxakis is right to remark that, while there were 'cursory references [to collective characteristics] in the works of most thinkers, only some proceeded to theoretical discussions of the very category [of national character]'.<sup>733</sup> This distinction well illustrates the very different roles which the notion of national character played in the thought of liberals and conservatives. For liberals the notion of national character was central to their schemes of analysis and interpretation. Liberals primarily came to think of national characters as not the result of a type of government – the view dominant in the eighteenth century – but as a determinant of what type of government the country was fit for, and would have.<sup>734</sup> Bagehot asserted that all 'thinking persons' agreed 'that of all ... circumstances ... affecting political problems, by far and out of all question the most important is national character', while Mill thought that 'a philosophy of law and institutions, not

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114).

<sup>729</sup> See e.g. Jones (2000: 52-55).

<sup>730</sup> See Parry (2006: 4-6, 11); Romani (2002); Varouxakis (2006a: 11); (2006b: 102).

<sup>731</sup> Mill quoted in Varouxakis (2006b: 100); see also (2002b: 126-7). See on other liberals Jones (2000: 43-4, 57-8); (2006: 15-7); Stapleton (2001: 31-2); Varouxakis (2006b: 108).

<sup>732</sup> Criticised by T.H. Green's as a reprehensible 'special military sense' of patriotism, quoted in Varouxakis (2006b: 106). See also Mandler (2006b, especially 7-8, 106-7, 123) for detail on conservatives' institutional patriotism.

<sup>733</sup> Varouxakis (1998: 375); see also (2002b: 53-4).

<sup>734</sup> Romani (2002). See e.g. Claeys (2010: 106) on the Positivists.

founded on a philosophy of national character, [was] an absurdity'.<sup>735</sup> As a consequence, the national characters of countries and their implications for government and politics 'were problems that preoccupied Victorian thinkers intensely'.<sup>736</sup> For conservatives, though, the situation was rather different.

### **Conservatives on national character, national community, and nation**

The notion of national character did not feature much in conservatives' attempts to make sense of their world. While they would on occasion talk of such things as 'the political traditions and social habits of the British people', the idea of national characters was assigned at best a minor causal role in their analyses of the origins of foreign policy and the course of international affairs.<sup>737</sup> This was not because conservatives explicitly rejected the notion of certain general differences between the populations of different countries, but because for them any such alleged difference was not particularly salient to international politics. This was the case both because conservatives had little sense of a national community which could share this character in the first place, and because conservatives thought of international politics as enacted by statesmen, rather than by such a national community as a whole.

#### Conservatives, national character, and national community

The first reason why the notion of national characters did not feature much in conservative thought was because conservatives did not perceive a homogeneous national community within a country which would share such a character. Conservatives thought that the differences between classes within a country were more meaningful than the commonalities within each country and differences between them. In addition, conservatives considered convergent or divergent interests as more influential on the position of states than the (dis)similarity of peoples.<sup>738</sup>

In Britain in general, 'the people' had become a political category during the 1830s and liberals had begun to reflect on 'the English national character'. Conservatives, however, lacked a vision of an English national community with a national character: they 'neither wanted nor needed an idea of an English people of similar traits or qualities', and retained a hierarchical, class-based understanding of the

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<sup>735</sup> Bagehot cited in Varouxakis (1998: 387) and Mill cited in Jones (2000: 28). On Mill, see further Varouxakis (1998, especially 375-9) and (2002b: ch. 4).

<sup>736</sup> Craig (2003: 499); see also Varouxakis (1998: 376-7, 381, 383).

<sup>737</sup> Gleig (1871: 118).

<sup>738</sup> See e.g. Gleig (1866: 650) on Anglo-American relations.

characteristics of people.<sup>739</sup> The idea of there being one national community stayed closely linked to liberalism throughout the nineteenth century, with the conservatives not fully incorporating it into their world-view until the early twentieth century.<sup>740</sup>

The notion of a national community appeared in conservatives' writings primarily when they contested liberal arguments, as for instance in reaction to the liberal assumption that the cohesion of society required a certain amount of homogeneity among the population. Conservatives disagreed with this ambition to fashion a national community. They certainly thought that a country needed internal stability, 'social cohesion', and unity.<sup>741</sup> But for conservatives social cohesion did not rest on a national community. Indeed, they argued that the attempt to fashion such a community, to attain a certain homogeneity among the population, was in fact damaging to the cohesion of a society.

It was only France which conservatives sometimes treated as if it had a homogeneous, national community and national character, and they portrayed France as an unfortunate exception. In general, conservatives argued, a stable, orderly polity rested on 'traditions' and 'enduring institutions'.<sup>742</sup> They advocated a stratified order with multiple classes, with each class adhering to its particular societal role and with the general mass of the people deferring to the authority and leadership of the ruling class.<sup>743</sup> Cohesion was provided through an institutional patriotism, a shared loyalty to certain symbols and institutions which could 'bind the country together'.<sup>744</sup> France, conservatives argued, had over the last eighty years destroyed its traditions and institutions, over an endless cycle of revolutions, and this attempted homogenisation of its society had in effect destroyed social cohesion. As Wilson put it, France may have 'rendered her people more homogeneous than any other. Pity she cannot also boast that they are more united. Pity she cannot also boast that concord of classes in a solid social order'.<sup>745</sup>

The general absence of the notion of a national community from the ontology of conservatives was further underscored by their use of the term "nation", which

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<sup>739</sup> Mandler (2006b: 29, see also 35, 39-42).

<sup>740</sup> Mandler (2006b: 60).

<sup>741</sup> Cecil (1870: 550); see also Gleig (1870a: 641, 656); (1870b: 657); Hamley 1870c: 782-3); (1871c: 497); (1871b: 383); (1870b: 663); Lever (1871b: 585); (1871d: 367); Wilson (1870: 374-5).

<sup>742</sup> Gleig (1870a: 642) and Cecil (1871: 258-9); see also Gleig (1870a: 643, 645, 650, 654); Hamley (1870c: 781-2); Wilson (1871b: 354-5).

<sup>743</sup> Cecil (1871: 264); Swayne (1867: 193); Wilson (1871b: 355). See also Bentley (2001: 35, 68, 84) on Cecil; Blake (1998: 278-9) and Parry (2007: 34) on Disraeli.

<sup>744</sup> Hamley (1870a: 397); see also (1870b: 527-8).

<sup>745</sup> Wilson (1871b: 355). See also Cecil (1871: 258); Gleig (1870a: 641, 650); Hamley (1870c: 782-3); Lever

generally did not have a national community as its referent. They employed it often, but generally merely as a synonym for country, with no further semantic burden added.<sup>746</sup> Hamley, for instance, saw no problem in using the term nation to refer to Prussia or the Austrian Empire.<sup>747</sup> In less common instances, conservatives' use of nation did not refer to a country, but rather to the inhabitants of a country – with, however, no sense of designating a particular cultural whole, a national community. Hence for example Oliphant's use of the term nation in referring to the population of Holstein.<sup>748</sup> A further sign of this wariness towards the notion of a national community was that conservatives generally invoked 'the country's interests' rather than 'the national interest'.<sup>749</sup> Conservatives wrote of a nation as of an established political reality, rather than referring to a sense of cultural commonality among a population, which had the potential to gain political expression as well in a nation-state.<sup>750</sup>

The conservatives' distance from the notion of national communities was also evident in their commentary on the American South. Those few liberals who spoke favourably of the American South during the civil war, did so in terms rejoicing about a new nation establishing itself.<sup>751</sup> Gladstone, for instance, stated that the 'leaders of the South have made an army; they are making, it appears a navy; and they have made what is more than either, they have made a nation!'.<sup>752</sup> Conservatives inverted this assessment. They disregarded the abstract notion of a distinct nation; what compelled recognition were rather the functioning practical institutions of government, both civil and military; the deference paid to this government by the populace; and the *de facto* independence of the South.<sup>753</sup>

And while conservatives emphasised the marked differences between North and South, they did not consider these the result of different national characters. The South had able statesmen and generals, while the North had demagogues for the former, whose infighting led to the appointment of incompetents for the latter. But this was the

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(1871b: 581); Wilson (1870: 374-5).

<sup>746</sup> See especially Clerke (1878: 255); Courthope (1880: 566-7); Kinglake and Austin (1880: 536-541).

<sup>747</sup> Hamley (1870a: 384) and (1871a: 247-8).

<sup>748</sup> Oliphant (1864b: 504), see also Gleig (1870a: 655) for a similar use of nation to refer to the population of Prussia.

<sup>749</sup> See e.g. Hamley (1877b: 116); MacDougall (1877: 487). For the occasional exception, see Cowell (1877h: 621) and Craik and Smith (1877: 293).

<sup>750</sup> Cecil (1862: 563-4); Hamley (1864a: 447); Mackay (1866a: 21); Patterson (1862b: 711-12); Wolseley (1863: 24-25).

<sup>751</sup> See e.g. Campbell (2003: 58); Whitridge (1962: 690-1).

<sup>752</sup> Gladstone (1862).

<sup>753</sup> Beresford Hope (1862: 8); (1863: 41, 43); Cecil (1862: 563-4); (1865: 250-1, 285-6); Forsyth (1862: 277); Hamley (1862a: 129-30); (1864a: 447); Patterson (1862a: 637); Spence (1862: 3); Wolseley (1863: 24-5).

result of different political systems; while a cross-section of the people would look fairly similar, the Northern democratic system supplied worthless leaders, with the talented avoiding public life, while the South's aristocratic system did funnel the men of ability into government.<sup>754</sup> Indeed, conservatives saw no difference between the British and the Americans significant enough to prevent them from asserting that democracy's failure overseas compelled the conclusion that it would surely in Britain lead to anarchy or tyranny too.<sup>755</sup>

#### International politics, national characters, and statesmen's attitudes

The second reason why the idea of national characters did not feature much in conservative thought was because they assumed that the course of international affairs was the result of the decisions made by statesmen, whose *attitudes* were consequently important, rather than based on the people, whose *character* would be crucial. Regardless of the existence of a national character or community, statesmen could not be subsumed in either – they would not be steered by any national community, their attitudes would not be determined by any national character.<sup>756</sup>

The different value which conservatives placed on the role of peoples and their characters on the one hand and statesmen and their attitudes on the other is evident in Hamley's six leaders on the Franco-Prussian war for *Blackwood's Magazine*. In the early stages of the war, Hamley's initial judgement, based on his knowledge of the German people in general, was that after this conflict the Germans would prefer peaceful means to glory.<sup>757</sup> This assessment was not so much based on a positive idea of a German national character, as on the understanding that the Germans were not the French; 'it is extremely unlikely', Hamley argued, 'that any other nation would pursue or use conquest as the French nation did'.<sup>758</sup> Moreover, conservatives generally did not portray the popular passions possibly motivating foreign policy as being an aspect of a national character. Even when speaking of this aberrant French proclivity they used terms such as 'intoxication'.<sup>759</sup> More important than the details of Hamley's assessment of the likely

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<sup>754</sup> Beresford Hope (1862: 15, 22, 30-1); Bourke (1862: 343); Cecil (1861: 261, 275, 279-81); (1862: 545-9, 553); Hamley (1862a: 120-1); (1862b: 520); (1864b: 619); Mackay (1866b: 623); Montagu (1861: 86); Forsyth (1862: 270-1); Wolseley (1863: 19-21).

<sup>755</sup> Beresford Hope (1862: 10); Cecil (1861: 256, 260); (1862: 549, 554-5); (1865: 255, 264); Ferguson (1861: 770, 777); Montagu (1861: 93-4).

<sup>756</sup> See e.g. Craik and Smith (1877: 287).

<sup>757</sup> Hamley (1870c: 785).

<sup>758</sup> Hamley (1870c: 785). See also Gleig (1870b: 661); Wilson (1870: 373-4, 379).

<sup>759</sup> Wilson (1870: 379). See also Cecil (1870: 546), wondering whether the 'German triumph' would lead to 'intoxication'.

disposition of the German people, is that he discarded these inquiries as the war progressed. The actions of the Prussian army and the German terms for peace, Hamley thought, provided some insight into the attitudes of Prussia's statesmen. This was then the basis for Hamley's further speculations on the possible course of events in Europe in the aftermath of the war.<sup>760</sup> The attitudes of statesmen were what really determined the course taken by a country in international politics.

Conservatives made little use of the notion of national characters in making sense of international affairs, both because they did not have a strong sense of national community, which could share such a character, and because they thought that statesmen, rather than countries as a whole, were the actors of international politics. When liberals did invoke the centrality of national character, conservative commentators disapproved. This contrast was especially prominent in conservative and liberal commentary on the Franco-Prussian War and on the Eastern Question crisis of the late 1870s.

#### National character and the Franco-Prussian War

In reflecting on the cause and significance of the Franco-Prussian war, the notion of national characters loomed large in the narrative of liberal commentators, while it did not feature much in the conservatives' explanatory schemes. Liberals located the immediate cause of the war in France's type of government, but they also assumed that it was the particular French national character which had made Napoleon III's Caesarism possible.<sup>761</sup> Liberals furthermore thought the war represented a struggle between the values of 'German discipline, domesticity and morality against French disorder and sensuality', as present in 'the national characters of the belligerents'.<sup>762</sup> As the war drew to an end, liberals asserted that forcing France to cede Alsace and Lorraine had lost Prussia the imprimatur of morality.<sup>763</sup> Liberals felt compelled to conclude that the admirable German national character had been either an illusion or was now a thing of the past. The peace demands had revealed the aggressive, unenlightened national character of the Germans, which could be expected to endure

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<sup>760</sup> See e.g. Hamley (1871c: 495-6, 504-5).

<sup>761</sup> Pratt (1985: 549); Varouxakis (1998: 386).

<sup>762</sup> Parry (2006: 282) and Pratt (1985: 547). See e.g. Bagehot (1871a: 253); Dwyer (1870: 386); Gladstone (1870: 564-5, 578-80); Mill (1870). See also Parry (2006: 247-8, 277-8, 282-3); Postgate and Vallance (1937: 127-8); Pratt (1985: 543-4, 548-50, 557); Raymond (1921: 73-5).

<sup>763</sup> Parry (2006: 283); Pratt (1985: 559-60, 562).



and to inform future policy.<sup>764</sup> The notion of national characters was thus central to liberals' accounts of the cause of the Franco-Prussian war as well as of the significance of both the war in general and the peace terms in particular.

Unlike liberals, however, conservatives did not think that the war revolved around different national characters, one admired and the other reviled. They saw the war as having been caused by 'evil passions ... on both sides'.<sup>765</sup> And conservatives thought that the war was significant, beyond the interests involved, not as a struggle of values, but as a possible cause for further disorder and instability in Europe.<sup>766</sup> Prussia's desire for Alsace and Lorraine, finally, merely indicated a current attitude of Prussia's statesmen, rather than a German national character.<sup>767</sup> If Prussia's aggression had followed from its national character, then one could expect Prussia's future policy to be aggressive too. However, the question whether Prussia's aggressive attitude would endure beyond the war was exactly a topic of conservative concern and speculation.<sup>768</sup> In this debate, conservatives and liberals held a fundamentally different perspective on events, due to their giving salience, or not, to the notion of national characters. Half a dozen years later, during the Eastern Question crisis, conservatives went further and explicitly argued against those liberal accounts which assumed an essential difference between national communities.

#### Drawing distinctions during the Eastern Question Crisis: Muslims and Christians, Turks and Europeans

In the debates surrounding the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78, conservatives rejected the notion of national characters, as part of their arguments aimed at proving Hamley's assertion that 'there cannot be the slightest moral reason why we should desire to have the rule of the Muscovite substituted for that of the Turk in Europe, and there are many and strong political reasons why we should object to such a substitution'.<sup>769</sup>

Conservatives argued for the absence of any 'innate barbarity' in the 'Turks, admonishing liberals for their 'hasty generalisations' based on 'false sentiment' about the

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<sup>764</sup> Pratt (1985: 556, 558, 562, 568-70, 574-5); Schroeder (1980: 164).

<sup>765</sup> Hamley (1871a: 253) and Lever (1870c: 510); see also Cecil (1864a: 238, 240-1, 283); (1870: 545, 551-2); Dasent (1870: 299-302, 312-3); Gleig (1870a: 650-1); (1870b: 662); Hamley (1870a: 384-5); (1871b: 375, 388); (1871c: 495, 504); Lever (1870c: 510); Wilson (1870: 391-2); (1871a: 82); (1871b: 359-60, 367). See also Swayne (1867: 196) for a similar diagnosis of the cause of the Austro-Prussian war of 1866.

<sup>766</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1870: 544-5); Vincent (1872a: 332); (1872b: 569).

<sup>767</sup> Wilson (1871b: 368); see also Cecil (1870: 540, 554); Dasent (1870: 313, 319); Hamley (1871a: 243, 255); (1871c: 488-93); Lever (1871b: 583); Oliphant (1864b: 511); Wilson (1870: 383); (1871b: 367-8, 370).

<sup>768</sup> Cecil (1870: 546, 554-6); Hamley (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 488-90, 495).

<sup>769</sup> Hamley (1877d: 363).

supposedly 'unspeakable Turks'.<sup>770</sup> They noted that vices and virtues were present in the traditions and customs of all peoples and religions. In particular, conservatives argued that Islam and 'Mohammedan law' should be considered as compatible with 'something like good and just and progressive government', with the reforms recently enacted in Egypt in mind.<sup>771</sup> Several conservative commentators even admonished the liberals for interpreting their Christian humanitarianism in such a way as to lead them to 'advocate injustice or persecution against a whole race, merely because that race is not Christian'.<sup>772</sup>

In reaction to the Bulgarian atrocities, conservatives argued that the faults of Ottoman administration ought not to be understood as the result of essential difference following from a Muslim or Turkish national character. The atrocities were the result of the institutional weakness of the Ottoman state.<sup>773</sup> Furthermore, acts such as these were 'not the property of one race or age': all European states had acted similarly to the Ottoman Empire in dealing with revolts and rebellions.<sup>774</sup> Finally, the rule of Christian Russia would prove even more oppressive: 'her cruelty and oppression differ from [the Turks] only in degree whilst her intolerance is greater'.<sup>775</sup> The proper reaction to the Bulgarian atrocities, conservatives concluded, was not to deprive the Ottoman Empire of its European provinces, but rather to help it improve its institutions and thus quality of government. The conservatives' perspective focused on the effects of social and political institutions and consequently lacked the sense of hierarchy and – depending on the particular conceptualisation – immutability associated with the idea of national characters.<sup>776</sup>

The idea of national characters did not play an important role in the attempts of conservatives to make sense of their world. In this they differed markedly from their liberal interlocutors, for whom national characters were positively a preoccupation.

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<sup>770</sup> Respectively Smith (1876: 552); Palgrave (1878: 556, see also 560); Cowell (1876b: 255); Hamley (1877b: 124). See also Craik (1877: 565); Hamley (1877f: 643).

<sup>771</sup> Smith and Layard (1877: 305-6). See also Craik (1878b: 260); Hamley (1878d: 505).

<sup>772</sup> Smith and Layard (1877: 313). See also Craik (1878a: 271); Smith (1876: 552).

<sup>773</sup> Cowell (1876d: 639); (1877h: 617-8); Craik (1878b: 261, 284-5); Hamley (1877d: 362); Smith and Layard (1877: 306); Smith and Cowell (1877: 591-2).

<sup>774</sup> Smith (1876: 544-5). See also Cowell (1877b: 254); Craik and Smith (1877: 295); Shand (1878: 738); Smith (1876: 544-5, 553). In addition, the Porte's Christian subjects carried out equally unpleasant acts as part of their rebellion. See Cowell (1876b: 247; 1877g: 367); Hamley (1877c: 252; 1878c: 354); Smith (1876: 563-4); Smith and Layard (1877: 283).

<sup>775</sup> Cowell (1877a: 109; see also 1876d: 641; 1876e: 769; 1877h: 617-8).

<sup>776</sup> Craik (1878b: 260-1, 281, 285); Smith (1876: 552). See also Jones (2006); Mandler (2006b: 17-22).

### **Nationality as a sentiment of the people**

Conservatives associated the idea of nationality with liberals and their particular perspective on the international sphere. Patterson for instance spoke of the liberals and their 'pet principle of nationality', and Cecil characterised 'Nationality and Free Trade' as 'the doctrines of the Liberal party'.<sup>777</sup> Conservatives did not themselves discern a role for nationhood as an empirical fact rather than a notion held and furthered by particular parties – they viewed nationality as an idea, part of a rhetoric, with its referent lying in the imagination rather than in reality. Neither did any conservative author clearly define the concept of nationality. The understanding running through their arguments, however, was that the principle of nationality was expressed through a particular author presenting their vision of a certain collection of culturally similar people who ought to be part of one polity.

Conservatives recognised that the notion of nationality had increasingly gained currency since the end of the Napoleonic wars. Some conservatives, however, placed the concept in the realm of art and high culture, rather than of politics and general society. In the conservative periodicals, Italian feelings of local patriotism and of nationality were discussed, not in articles on Italian affairs in international politics, but rather primarily in articles dealing with recent Italian cultural output. In this way, conservatives portrayed the sentiment of nationality as involved first of all with the imagination of artists and authors – all the easier then to paint the principle of nationality as a delusion, without connection to reality, merely the 'visionary vapouring' of idealists.<sup>778</sup>

Conservatives generally spoke of 'the sentiment of nationality', as compared to liberal talk of 'the principle of nationality'. For liberals the notion denoted first of all an ethical norm and was prescriptive. For conservatives the notion denoted first of all a certain emotional commitment and was used descriptively. Conservative authors located the notion of nationality in the realm of passion rather than reason; they for instance spoke of the 'idea of German unity' as a 'romantic', 'poetic notion'.<sup>779</sup> Cecil argued that it was impossible to engage substantively with the principle, since the notion of nationality was illusory, mostly a mere imputation. 'The modern theory of nationality', Cecil began, 'is safe from refutation. The blows of argument fall harmlessly upon its unsubstantial

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<sup>777</sup> Patterson (1864b: 647) and Cecil (1871: 266).

<sup>778</sup> Atkinson (1859: 353-4). See also e.g. Cecil (1862: 230); Hardman (1865: 665-6); and James White's (1861) article 'Italy'.

<sup>779</sup> Cecil (1864a: 271) and Dasent (1870: 295).

forms. ... a domain of thought where no term is defined, no principle laid down, and no question propounded for investigation'.<sup>780</sup> As a consequence, the theory of nationality could be used without consistency, for whatever purpose a particular author desired. As Cecil noted; 'Then it [the Treaty of Vienna] was denounced for enlarging Bavaria and Prussia at the expense of petty states, and for suppressing the ancient republic of Genoa by annexing it to Piedmont; now it is despised for not having risen to the grandeur of the conception of a United Germany and a United Italy'.<sup>781</sup> Cecil thus argued that the authors advocating the theory of nationality were changeable in their claims and theories, in where they located a prescriptive sense of nationality. These authors could act thus, conservatives thought, because the notion of nationality was insubstantial, at basis a passion, resting in the imagination rather than in reality.

Following from this understanding of the sentiment of nationality as a passion, conservatives linked it primarily to the general populace, as opposed to statesmen. Conservatives generally assumed, with Lever, 'that the upper and lower classes of society have nothing in common, and speak each in a different political language'.<sup>782</sup> Cecil observed that German authors, in trying to justify the German conquest of the Danish Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, employed two different discourses: one aimed at statesmen, focusing on treaty rights and obligations, and one aimed at the people in general, which played on the sentiment of nationality, or what Cecil termed 'the language grievance', which 'has been kept chiefly for popular use'.<sup>783</sup> This characterisation had the strong subtext that the former claims could be reasonable – even if they were not in the context of the Danish Duchies affair – while the latter were merely an emotional appeal, without legitimate purchase in the first place.

While statesmen, in the conservative reading, did not subscribe to the sentiment of nationality, the notion could thus still influence them in their actions. Statesmen might either try to utilise the sentiment as a means to further their own objectives – as conservatives thought Cavour, Napoleon III, and Bismarck did – or they could feel forced to pander to the passion present amongst their people — which conservatives at different times observed among rulers such as Napoleon III and the Tsar Alexander.<sup>784</sup>

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<sup>780</sup> Cecil (1862: 221-2).

<sup>781</sup> Cecil (1862: 221-2).

<sup>782</sup> Lever (1871f: 733).

<sup>783</sup> Cecil (1864a: 271, 273). See also Cecil (1870: 546); Dasent (1870: 295); Lever (1871b: 583); Oliphant (1864a: 389-90); Patterson (1864a: 122, 129-30). See Kinglake and Austin (1880: 526-7) for a similar distinction on Russia's internal debate during the Eastern Question crisis.

<sup>784</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1871: 263), Dasent (1870: 299), and Patterson (1860: 34, 41-51, 94-9) on Napoleon III; Cecil (1870: 546); (1871: 257-8); Dasent (1870: 295); and Wilson (1871: 80) on Bismarck; and Cowell

### The influence of nationality on the unifications of Italy and Germany

In reflecting on the unifications of both Italy and Germany, conservative authors accorded the notion of nationality little influence on events. It played a role not as a genuine motivation, as an independent causal force, but merely as a superficial justification for all-too-common schemes of aggrandisement.

As the events of 1859-61 led to the unification of Italy, conservatives at no moment thought that a widespread Italian desire for national unification was driving these events. There was, first of all, no Italian national community which could spur unification on. Forsyth for instance remarked in 1861: 'Men forget also, that since the fall of the Roman Empire (if even before it) there never has been a time when Italy could be called a nation, any more than a stack of timber can be called a ship.'<sup>785</sup> A nation was here understood as a politically unified state, nationality dependent on citizenship. A single Italian nationality, in conservatives' understanding of the term, could only be the consequence of the realisation of a unified Italian polity, rather than an impetus to it.

Conservative commentators argued that the Italian sentiment of nationality had a negligible causal force. Hardman observed that the Piedmontese supported the war with Austria from deference to their king and possibly a detestation of the Austrians – the people did not understand or care about the notion of Italian independence, let alone unity.<sup>786</sup> In contrast, the liberal Matthew Arnold explicitly argued for the force of Italian nationality, based as it was in the shared history of glorious Rome.<sup>787</sup> Swayne gently suggested that the appeal of the Roman classical heritage to educated Britons had resulted among them in an imagined vista of Italy 'far brighter and more glorious than reality'.<sup>788</sup> Most conservatives were less tactful, with for instance Atkinson writing that the 'nationality of Italy, we have seen, is but the baseless phantom of political romance. ... we deem Italian nationality, unity, or indeed, political independence, to be among those wild chimeras and alluring phantoms', those 'words ... of delusion' and that 'visionary vapouring', characteristic of demagogues rather than statesmen.<sup>789</sup>

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(1876b: 250) on the Tsar.

<sup>785</sup> Forsyth (1861: 135). See also Atkinson (1859: 355); Aytoun (1860: 253); Cecil (1859: 9-10); Lever (1863a: 583); (1863b: 657); (1863c: 54, 62); Oliphant (1860b: 647); Swayne (1856: 88-9); Tremeneheere (1859: 259-60); White (1861).

<sup>786</sup> Hardman (1859: 621). See also Aytoun (1860: 250-1); Cecil (1862: 225-6); Forsyth (1860: 107); Oliphant (1860b: 636-8, 641, 647); Patterson (1859b: 376-7); Tremeneheere (1859: 244, 261); White (1861).

<sup>787</sup> Arnold (1859: 4, 11-17).

<sup>788</sup> Swayne (1856: 77). See also Atkinson (1859: 351).

<sup>789</sup> Atkinson (1859: 350-1). See also Atkinson (1859: 353-4, 361, 365); Cecil (1862: 221-2, 229-30); Forsyth (1861: 147).

Their different thoughts on Italian nationality also led conservatives and liberals to assign a different significance to the treaty of Villafranca. Both conservatives and liberals thought that with Villafranca Napoleon III had effectively distanced himself from the realisation of independence for Italy. Unlike conservatives, liberals took this as a reason to increase their support for the Italian cause. Now that Napoleon III was no longer associated with the ideal of Italian liberty, liberals reasoned, there was no danger any more of him perverting the Italian movement to his own despotic ends. Support for Italy no longer implied support for France, and could thus be all the more wholeheartedly given.<sup>790</sup> For liberals Italian events had their own impetus, based on the ideals of Italian independence and later on Italian national unity. Once uncoupled from the suspect French involvement, which could be for aggrandisement as well as for liberty, the Italian movement was pure in pursuing developments aiming at the realisation of liberal ideals. Matthew Arnold, for one, argued that 'the free internal development of Italy' would see 'her progress towards a national unity'.<sup>791</sup> For conservatives, though, events were driven by French and Piedmontese desires for aggrandisement, and the liberals' ethical ideals and principles did not reflect a second impetus to events, but rather a mere sham structure of justification for these expansionist actions. Villafranca had not decoupled an admirable movement based on moral ideals from a movement of doubtful morality, as for the liberals, but had rather shown the irrelevance of the moral ideal of the principle of nationality to the substance of international politics.

Conservative commentators credited the war against Austria, the unrest and annexations in central Italy, Garibaldi's exploits in the south of Italy, and the eventual unification of Italy by Piedmont, partly to Napoleon III and his meddling, and most of all to Cavour and his exceptional ability as a statesman. An ability exercised, conservatives thought, in service of the aggrandisement of Piedmont, not of Italy as a whole. Even Lever's retrospective account, written in 1863, placed Cavour front and centre as the impetus behind the events culminating in the unification of Italy, with only an instrumental role for the people and the revolutionaries Mazzini and Garibaldi, and not so much of a mention of any supposed trend to or norm for the formation of nation-states.<sup>792</sup>

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<sup>790</sup> Beales (1961: 111); Bevington (1953: xviii); McIntire (1983: 124-7); Parry (2006: 228).

<sup>791</sup> Arnold (1859: 4-11).

<sup>792</sup> Lever (1863a: 580-1, 583); (1863b: 653, 657, 659, 661-4); (1863c: 54, 59-61). See also Cecil (1859: 4); Forsyth (1861: 133-4); Hardman (1858: 464); (1859: 612-5); Oliphant (1860c: 735, 740); Patterson (1860: 104-7); (1862c: 503-5).

As when understanding Italian affairs, in making sense of the unification of Germany from 1864 to 1871 conservatives envisaged only a minor role for the sentiment of nationality. Liberals regarded these events as revolving around the German 'national cause', the 'creat[ion of] the unified nation for which Germans had yearned', part of the broader telos of the international sphere.<sup>793</sup> Conservatives, in contrast, did not think that unification had been propelled by the sentiment of nationality. Political integration was not the inevitable outcome, and mostly driven by various forms of great power competition.<sup>794</sup> The sentiment of nationality primarily influenced events as one particular scheme of justification employed to legitimise Prussia's acts of aggrandisement.

There was little sense in conservatives' considerations of German unification of the relevance of the idea of nationality. Unification was seen as an explicitly political project, resting on the twin pillars of German ambition and the threat of France to the minor German states.<sup>795</sup> Conservatives emphasised that the events from 1864 to 1871 ought to be interpreted as driven by competition between Prussia, Austria, and France. All were motivated by a patriotic desire to increase the glory of their polity. For Prussia and Austria, glory lay in having the sole, uncontested leadership of the German states. Conservatives emphasised that Bismarck did not 'care one straw for German unity', but was interested instead in the 'ascendancy of Prussia in Germany, to the exclusion of Austria'.<sup>796</sup> When Austria was mostly side-lined after the battle of Sadowa in 1866, conservatives still perceived the process as revolving around the ambition of Prussia, rather than any German national endeavour. 'The events between 1863 and 1870 must be looked upon', Cecil asserted, 'as one transaction – as successive acts of the great drama of Prussian aggrandisement'.<sup>797</sup>

The smaller German states were, conservatives argued, also motivated by a desire for glory.<sup>798</sup> Due to their limited power, however, these polities could not achieve imperial glory without deferring to the leadership of a major state, such as Prussia, with

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<sup>793</sup> Dicey (1866b: 484) and Pratt (1985: 557); see also e.g. Bagehot (1866); Dicey (1866b: 482-3); Dwyer (1870: 390-4). See further Pratt (1985: 546).

<sup>794</sup> Dasent (1870: 299); Oliphant (1864a: 394); (1864b: 503); (1865: 122); Patterson (1864a: 131); Wilson (1871b: 362, 364).

<sup>795</sup> Cecil (1870: 554); Dasent (1870: 296); Swayne (1867: 195, 197); Wilson (1870: 384, 386, 389); (1871b: 371-2).

<sup>796</sup> Swayne (1867: 197) and Wilson (1871a: 78); see also Dasent (1870: 297).

<sup>797</sup> Cecil (1870: 545). See also Wilson (1871a: 81; see also 82); see also Cecil (1864a: 252-3); Dasent (1870: 294); Gleig (1870a: 654); Oliphant (1864a: 394, 396); (1864b: 503); (1865: 122); Patterson (1864a: 130); (1864b: 641); Swayne (1867: 197).

<sup>798</sup> Cecil (1864a: 239-2, 248, 262, 267-8, 270, 275); Patterson (1864a: 129-132); (1864b: 128-9); Oliphant (1864a: 391-2).

a similar ambition. Only by 'confiding to the charge of Prussia its ambitions ... its diplomacy ... its glory, its external force and aggrandisement' could the German states hope to realise any of their ambitions.<sup>799</sup> Moreover, the threat of French conquest was needed to galvanise the German polities into unification. Conservatives observed a slowly changing general dynamic in international politics, where a polity needed to be of increasingly considerable size to guarantee its independence and influence.<sup>800</sup> Regarding Germany in particular, Wilson remarked that the competition between all the German polities would 'inevitably terminat[e] – unless Germany were to share the fate of Poland – in the concession of avowed supremacy to that which at length proved the strongest of the conflicting powers'.<sup>801</sup> By giving the German states a stark, immediate choice between Prussian supremacy and French subjugation, the French declaration of war 'precipitated' the unification of the German states under Prussian leadership.<sup>802</sup>

The Germans' desire for glory and for independence from France thus impelled them to band together with and defer to Prussia, despite them being 'by no means particularly fond of the Prussians'.<sup>803</sup> Oliphant, who had travelled through the Duchies during the crises, emphasised repeatedly the dislike and distrust evident between the various Federal German polities, Prussia, and Austria.<sup>804</sup> The unification of Germany was consequently emphatically not, in the minds of conservatives, a political unification of an otherwise harmonious national community. Unification was the supremacy and leadership of one over the others; Prussia was 'placing herself at the head of Germany so united', 'was now at the head of United Germany, and ... might annex as much of Germany as she chose', or was plain 'absorbing Germany'.<sup>805</sup> Conservatives thought of Germany as in effect a Prussian empire, with the German states only assenting because they needed Prussian leadership for their position in the international sphere to be viable.<sup>806</sup>

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<sup>799</sup> Wilson (1871a: 90); see also Hamley (1870c: 784); Oliphant (1865: 124); Wilson (1871a: 87). Gladstone's view (1870: 569-70) was subtly but importantly different. He assumed, as did other liberals, that Germans desired national unity, and realised Prussia needed to be a part of this unity for it to be achievable.

<sup>800</sup> Cecil (1864a: 237, 239); Dasent (1870: 296); Oliphant (1865: 124); Wilson (1870: 384); (1871b: 362, 371-2). For a similar sentiment expressed during the Eastern Question crisis, see Cowell (1877h: 611); (1878j: 504-6); Hamley (1877c: 251); (1878b: 242-3).

<sup>801</sup> Wilson (1871b: 362).

<sup>802</sup> Wilson (1870: 386). See also Wilson (1870: 384); (1871b: 371).

<sup>803</sup> Wilson (1871a: 78); see for a similar statement Oliphant (1865: 123).

<sup>804</sup> Oliphant (1864b: 503, 513, 516); (1865: 120, 122).

<sup>805</sup> Gleig (1870b: 662); Dasent (1870: 300); Swayne (1867: 195). See also Cecil (1870: 546); Dasent (1870: 293, 312); Hamley (1870c: 784); Lever (1871b: 582); Swayne (1867: 196); Wilson (1870: 383); (1871a: 73-4, 78, 90); (1871b: 368).

<sup>806</sup> See e.g. Wilson (1871a: 78).



Furthermore, this coherence was contingent – several conservatives remarked that without an external threat, internal animosity might prove too strong, and the bonds would dissolve.<sup>807</sup> Throughout the 1860s especially, conservatives thought of the unification of Germany as uncertain and reversible, which contrasted with the liberals' perception of unification as an inevitable development. In 1864 Cecil considered disintegration 'a far likelier' outcome for Germany than unification.<sup>808</sup> Regardless of whether they thought dissolution or union more likely, conservative commentators considered the result uncertain, following from contingent events and not from the instantiation, sooner or later, of an absolute trend to the realisation of the principle of nationality.<sup>809</sup>

Conservatives thus did not accord a central role to the sentiment of nationality in making sense of the unification of Germany. It was considered neither a necessary nor sufficient cause of unification – at most, a shared language would be a boon.<sup>810</sup> The sentiment of nationality functioned merely to justify and legitimise the aggrandisement and annexations involved in the unification of Germany. 'The high ambition to make Germany one and great', Gleig noted, 'supplied a ready excuse for [Prussia's] acts [of conquest]'.<sup>811</sup> The Germans' basic desire was not for unity, but for glory, and unity was merely a necessary means to glory.

When considering the significance of unification, as well as its cause, conservatives employed the narrative of great power politics rather than nationalities. Conservatives first and foremost understood this event as part of the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war, as one of the major and minor changes affecting the balance of power and unsettling the equilibrium of Europe.<sup>812</sup> They conceptually paired the unification of Germany with the collapse of France. Liberals, however, understood the unification of Germany first and foremost as part of the progress of civilisation and of their ethical ideals.<sup>813</sup> In contrast with conservatives, liberals conceptually paired the unification of Germany with the unification of Italy. They were both part of a general

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<sup>807</sup> Oliphant stressed these centrifugal elements in his first-hand accounts of the state of affairs in the Danish Duchies (e.g. Oliphant 1965: 124). See also Cecil (1864a: 284); Hamley (1870c: 784); Wilson (1871b: 372).

<sup>808</sup> (Cecil 1864a: 284). See also Dasent (1870: 299); Oliphant (1864a: 394); (1864b: 503); (1865: 122); Patterson (1864a: 131); Wilson (1871b: 362, 364).

<sup>809</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1870: 554); (Wilson 1871: 371-2).

<sup>810</sup> See e.g. Hamley (1870c: 784).

<sup>811</sup> Gleig (1870a: 655). See also Swayne (1867: 195-7).

<sup>812</sup> Cecil (1870: 540); Hamley (1870b: 524); (1870c: 782-3, 789); (1871a: 247-8); (1871c: 495-6, 505-6); Lever (1871a: 230-2); (1871f: 728).

<sup>813</sup> See e.g. Dicey (1866a: 393-4). See also Pratt (1985: 557-9).

progress, towards a Europe configured in accord with the principle of nationality.<sup>814</sup>

### **The sentiment of nationality and aggression in international politics**

The main role which conservatives discerned for the sentiment of nationality in international affairs was as a spur to aggression, war, and conquest. On the one hand, for people passionately caught up in the idea of nationality, the sentiment would function as an encouragement to war. The likely mismatch between the principle of nationality's normative order and the de facto configuration of Europe would imply territorial acquisition through military conquest. On the other hand, for people overtaken by a more general territorial ambition and desire for military glory, the principle of nationality functioned as an ad hoc justification available to legitimise, to audiences who subscribed to the principle, a course of conquest.<sup>815</sup> Confronted with people overwhelmed by national sentiment – for instance 'involved in the mania for the triumph of the German idea' – statesmen would either feel forced to pander to them, or would try and utilise this passion to further their own ends.<sup>816</sup>

Conservatives saw the principle of nationality as primarily a facile justification for aggressive war, leading Europe into widespread disorder and instability. In the Italian context in particular, conservatives thought that their invocation of the principle of nationality had allowed Napoleon III and Cavour to gain support and approbation for what was in effect a policy of military conquest and territorial aggrandisement. Conservatives further accused Napoleon III and Cavour of fabricating the very revolutionary agitation on behalf of which they claimed to intervene. Where the actions of Napoleon III and Cavour should have been widely denounced for placing the peace and order of Europe in jeopardy, the purchase of the principle of nationality among some liberal and radical circles had actually, conservatives complained, caused their actions to be applauded.<sup>817</sup>

When taking a more general view of international politics, conservatives also considered the principle of nationality a danger to European stability; it in effect allowed a state to invade another country under the pretext of helping some nationality or other

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<sup>814</sup> See e.g. Bagehot (1866); Dicey (1866b: 483), on 'the passion for unity ... north [and] south of the Alps'.

<sup>815</sup> See for instance Cecil on 'the doctrines of nationality which the German Professors are now invoking to justify their schemes of annexation' (Cecil 1870: 543). See also Cecil (1864a: 238-9, 241-2); (1870: 555-6); Patterson (1864a: 111, 129, 131); (1864c: 253); Wilson (1871a: 87).

<sup>816</sup> Dasent (1870: 315). See also Cecil (1870: 553); Cowell (1876b: 250); Kinglake and Austin (1880: 526-7); Patterson (1864a: 111).

<sup>817</sup> Aytoun (1860: 247-8); Cecil (1859: 4); (1862: 235); Forsyth (1860: 107); Lever (1863b: 656-7, 665);

to regain its independence or proper territorial extent. As Forsyth remarked on the implications of the invocation of the principle of nationality with regards to Italian events: '[Russell's] "Italy for the Italians" is a captivating cry. It seems to express the sentiment of liberty with the force of a truism ... [but it in fact implies] the right of one independent State to interfere and foment insurrection in the dominion of another'.<sup>818</sup> Cecil similarly argued in 1862 that the principle of nationality made the relations of states with their subjects into an international issue. As a consequence, the principle of nationality made possible 'interventions in the internal affairs of other nations on the plea of political sympathy' wherever an unscrupulous statesman wanted: 'the real danger to Europe's future peace'.<sup>819</sup>

Patterson, Cecil, Dasent, and Wilson, some the conservative commentators who paid most attention to the role of the concept of nationality, thought of nationality as a new influence – 'the modern sentiment of nationality' – but one which fitted well within the established narrative of countries making a bid for universal monarchy or European hegemony.<sup>820</sup> While the sentiment of nationality might in theory seem more constrained in its scope than these aims – even seem antithetical to them – in practice, these conservatives argued, the sentiment of nationality was effectively on the same continuum as the desire for European hegemony, and nationalist passion could easily come to imply a bid for universal dominion over Europe. These frameworks of justification might be theoretically incommensurable, but they were merely utilised to legitimise a pre-existing lust for glory through conquest – they were not a principled basis for analysis and action.<sup>821</sup>

This was the role in which Patterson cast the principle of nationality in his discussion of Napoleon III's foreign policy project. The principle of nationality was merely an excuse which Napoleon III used in order to dismantle the Vienna settlement and with it the existing order of Europe.<sup>822</sup> Patterson developed this argument through a direct analogy with the developments surrounding the French revolution and Napoleonic wars: 'Napoleon III revives the policy of his Uncle ... The "Rights of Man," as understood by the Convention, was the idea developed by the first Revolution; the Rights of Nations, as interpreted by Louis Napoleon, is the corollary

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(1863c: 61); Oliphant (1860c: 735); Patterson (1859a: 376).

<sup>818</sup> Forsyth (1861: 135, see also 150, 154-5, 166-7).

<sup>819</sup> Cecil (1862: 235).

<sup>820</sup> Cecil (1870: 551).

<sup>821</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1864a: 241-2); Wilson (1871b: 359-60).

<sup>822</sup> Patterson (1860: 34, 41-51, 94-9).

idea which the New Revolution proposes to realize'.<sup>823</sup> In essence, Patterson argued, the project of Napoleon III was the same as that of Napoleon I. They were different only in that these days, one needed a structure of justification – 'a homage, however insincere, to public opinion' – to mask a policy of territorial aggrandisement: 'his Principle, "the sovereignty of the people," ... is a mere mask for his ambition'; 'in the principle of nationality ... he finds a safe and potent lever for assailing the existing fabric of European power ... to aggrandise France amidst the general disorder'.<sup>824</sup> The principle of nationality, as a sentiment which gained purchase in the passions of the masses, was an excuse which Napoleon III could use to destroy the Vienna settlement and gain hegemony over Europe, after which he could reorder Europe to the glory and aggrandisement of France.

Conservatives perceived this possibility of nationalist passion leading to a project of hegemony over Europe most strongly during the 1870s, first in the pan-Teutonism of Germany and later in the Pan-Slavism of Russia.<sup>825</sup> Dasent argued that due to the dominant influence of the sentiment of nationality in Germany 'the world ... [might] see a repetition of the Napoleonic conquests', because 'while the Germans pretend that they are fighting for German unity, they are, in fact, taking a leaf, and one of the worst leaves, out of the First Napoleon's book'.<sup>826</sup> Wilson, meanwhile, warned that the German ideas of pan-Teutonism and of 'the European empire which it claims to have held and lost' led to a sense of German nationality which, in its 'most comprehensive and complete form' would lead to 'German claims to something like universal dominion founded on these notions'.<sup>827</sup> Here the sentiment of nationality directly implied a bid for European hegemony. Wilson noted that this combination of the ideas of German nationalism and unification with the idea of the reunification of the Holy Roman Empire was intellectually incoherent: 'but the baseless fabric of an anachronistic vision'.<sup>828</sup> While these, though, may have been incompatible in theory, in practice they were mingled without problem. This was the realm of ideas and emotion, after all, not reason. The idea of nationhood was here merely a stepping stone towards the idea of universal dominion.

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<sup>823</sup> Patterson (1860: 41-51, 94-7). See also (1859a: 379, 382, 384-5, 392); (1859b: 375); (1860: 9-12, 75, 90, 114-5, 125-6); (1862b: 255, 259-60); (1862c: 518, 524).

<sup>824</sup> Patterson (1860: 41-51, 97-99).

<sup>825</sup> On Russia see Cowell (1876b: 253); Craik and Smith (1877: 307); Hamley (1878b: 242); Kinglake and Austin (1880: 526-7, 536-7, 541); Shand (1878: 739).

<sup>826</sup> Dasent (1870: 313 and 312).

<sup>827</sup> Wilson (1871a: 87-88).

<sup>828</sup> Wilson (1871b: 359-60).

Cecil affirmed the same conclusion. In his commentary on the Danish Duchies affair in 1864, he had recognised national sentiment, but had subsumed nationality in a world-view focused on great powers and geopolitics. The sentiment of nationality, he thought, revolved mostly around a wish for one's nationality to have hegemony over Europe.<sup>829</sup> As a consequence, while Cecil approved of a German desire for unity – the smaller polities would need to combine in order to form a viable state – he disapproved of the shift from this desire to a sentiment of nationality, with delusional dreams of dominion over Europe. By the time of the Franco-Prussian war, Cecil had come to recognise that the sentiment of nationality was related to a certain conception of rightful territorial boundaries.<sup>830</sup> For Cecil, however, as for Wilson, a crucial feature of this conception was the expansive character which it could assume. Cecil considered the 'definition of the Fatherland' in the 'national aspirations' of infatuated Germans as 'mad pretensions ... the freak of a whole people ... who are displaying in this war 'for an idea' the ferocity they were wont to reserve for the wars of religion'.<sup>831</sup>

Conservatives themselves, during this time, tended to perceive more diversity than uniformity in any collection of peoples. Most viewed assertions by authors of the existence of a certain nationality as suspect, likely to be an arbitrary demarcation motivated by other concerns, either over great power politics or over territorial aggrandisement. The sentiment of nationality, conservatives thought, fostered the other aggressive passions, while the principle of nationality provided yet another excuse for wars of aggression and bids for European hegemony.

### **Conservatives' rejection of the normative principle of nationality**

Conservatives rejected the normative argument for particular state boundaries based on the *principle* of nationality. They did discern a role for the *sentiment* of nationality when considering the boundaries of states, but merely as a practical rather than a moral constraint.<sup>832</sup>

#### The rejection of the principle of nationality

For many liberals, the principle of nationality prescribed what the proper boundaries of

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<sup>829</sup> Cecil (1864a: 238-41, 247-8, 260)

<sup>830</sup> Cecil (1870: 551-2).

<sup>831</sup> Cecil (1870: 555-6).

<sup>832</sup> And it was only for some conservatives that the sentiment of nationality was present even in this practical role. Some conservatives – especially military men – did not discuss the influence of the sentiment of nationality. Hamley, for instance, did not mention it in any of his six lectures on the Franco-

a state could be.<sup>833</sup> Commenting on the Prussian demand for the cession of Alsace and Lorraine during the Franco-Prussian war, Gladstone stated that annexation was only 'justified ... [if] the population be willing parties to the severance'.<sup>834</sup> Since the people of Alsace and Lorraine had no wish to join Germany, the demand for cession, Gladstone thought, was 'repulsive to the sense of modern civilisation'.<sup>835</sup> Liberals thought the annexation was immoral. While conservatives also argued that Prussia ought not to annex Alsace and Lorraine, the basis for their arguments towards Prussia was different. Conservatives asserted that Prussia's demand for territory was ill-advised and short-sighted. They recognised that victory in war, especially a defensive war, implied a right to territorial gain; there were 'precedents ... for treating cessions of territory as the natural prize of a successful campaign'.<sup>836</sup> Annexation was not, as for Gladstone and other liberals, a moral wrong because the people of Alsace and Lorraine did not want to be a part of Germany; it was instead a practical mistake.<sup>837</sup>

Throughout their works, conservative commentators rejected a normative role for the principle of nationality. They did not consider claims for self-determination morally weighty. Wilson, for instance, considered the idea of 'what is termed ... nationality, as the only legitimate basis of dominion' a ridiculous 'extravagance'.<sup>838</sup> Cecil, Oliphant, and Patterson, the main conservative commentators on the Polish Question and Danish Duchies affair in 1863-4, distinguished between territorial claims based on history (established practice and treaty recognition) and on nationality (the territory where an imagined people resided). They took seriously the claims based on treaties, on 'customary right' and 'the history of actual practice', discussed them even if they rejected them, while they dismissed claims based on the principle of nationality, as too absolute and essentialist.<sup>839</sup> A contingent commonality of customs or even language conferred no rights, held no normative power.

Conservatives, unlike liberals, did not consider the self-determination of

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Prussian war.

<sup>833</sup> See e.g. Harvie (1976: 98); Kent (1978: 24); Parry (2006: 233).

<sup>834</sup> Gladstone (1870: 582); see also Bagehot (1870); (1871a). See further Pratt (1985: 565-6); Schreuder (1978: 112).

<sup>835</sup> Gladstone to Granville, 4 Oct 1870, quoted in Schreuder (1978: 114).

<sup>836</sup> Cecil (1870: 543); see also Hamley (1871c: 488); Lever (1870c: 511).

<sup>837</sup> Cecil (1870: 543, 547-52); Dasent (1870: 313); Hamley (1871c: 493); Lever (1870c: 510-1); Oliphant (1864b: 511).

<sup>838</sup> Wilson (1871a: 88).

<sup>839</sup> Cecil (1864a: 243, 244). Compare for instance Cecil (1864a: 243-69) on established practice and treaties, with Cecil (1864a: 271-3) on claims of nationality. See also Oliphant (1864a: 385-6, 390-1, 396); Patterson (1864a: 128-130).

populations to be a relevant concern.<sup>840</sup> They did, however, endorse the notion of independence, as pertaining to the state, rather than self-determination, as pertaining to the nation.<sup>841</sup> When, for instance, Denmark was about to have two of its provinces appropriated by the German states, several conservatives did speak of the 'international rights' of states.<sup>842</sup> They elaborated little, but these seem to have been the right to govern a certain territory and be a sovereign state. Commenting on the course of German politics from 1864 onward, Dasent complained that 'the victory of an idea [the principle of nationality] means the destruction and extinction of existing rights'.<sup>843</sup> This right to sovereign rule over a certain area was not, however, based in a moral affirmation of the self-government of peoples. During the Eastern Question crisis, for instance, conservative commentators never described the rule of an empire over its subject people as foreign or alien government. Cowell moreover remarked on 'the redistribution of territory, which is sure to follow in the wake of a considerable war', without any sense that this change in governing state could be inherently problematic.<sup>844</sup> This contrasted with the liberal belief that the territory of state and nation should coincide, or at least that territory was not to be transferred from one state to another without the wishes of its inhabitants being considered.<sup>845</sup> Since conservatives did not acknowledge the salience of the idea of nations, the latter's self-government was for them a non-issue.<sup>846</sup> In their writings there was no sense of nationality as a prescriptive concept, standing above the *de facto* arrangements of politics and implying a more ethical configuration of the European sphere.<sup>847</sup>

#### Italy, the debates on intervention, and the principle of nationality

Conservatives' rejection of the principle of nationality was particularly stark in the debates on intervention in the context of the unification of Italy, from 1859-61. First of all, conservatives did not consider the Italian events of 1859-61 through the normative lens of the possible realisation of the principle of nationality in Italy.<sup>848</sup> Most

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<sup>840</sup> For liberals, see e.g. Gladstone (1879); Parry (2006: 228, 230-1, 328); Shannon (1963: 212, 215).

<sup>841</sup> Frere (1876: 494-6); Hamley (1877b: 131); Smith (1876: 555-8).

<sup>842</sup> Patterson (1864a: 131); see also Cecil (1864a: 247-8); Oliphant (1864a: 385-6, 369); (1864b: 506).

<sup>843</sup> Dasent (1870: 296, see also 297).

<sup>844</sup> Cowell (1878j: 499).

<sup>845</sup> Parry (2006: 283-4); Schreuder (1978: 111-3); Sylvest (2009: 42); Varouxakis (2006: 101).

<sup>846</sup> See e.g. Northcote (1878: 357).

<sup>847</sup> For instances where one would expect nationality to be considered as a normative category see Oliphant (1864a: 385-6); (1865: 122). See also Lever (1869: 361).

<sup>848</sup> Atkinson (1859: 350-1, 354); Aytoun (1860: 247-8); Cecil (1859: 27); (1862: 212, 226, 234-5); Forsyth (1860: 107); (1861: 133-4); Lever (1863a: 580-1, 583); (1863c: 54); Oliphant (1860b: 647-9); (1860c: 740); Patterson (1859a: 391-2); (1859b: 376-7); (1860: 75-8, 104-7); (1862a: 338-9); Tremenhare (1859: 266,

conservative authors simply did not pay much attention in their writings to the future and valuation of Italian domestic arrangements.<sup>849</sup> Instead they were primarily concerned with the general peace and stability of Europe.<sup>850</sup>

The absence of Italian nationhood from the ontology of conservative commentators, let alone the principle of nationality from their normative commitments, was most evident in where conservatives considered the boundaries between inside and outside to be, in the debates on intervention in Italy. When discussing Italy as a political entity, conservatives used the existing states of Italy and their boundaries to demarcate the internal and external.<sup>851</sup> Aytoun, discussing the internal disturbances in the Papal States early in 1860, portrayed the possible involvement of either Naples or Piedmont as external intervention, the thin end of a wedge which might lead to multiple great powers becoming involved.<sup>852</sup>

Liberals' affirmation of the notion of nationality led them to view Italian affairs as not intrinsically international, but primarily a matter of 'local freedom and reform in the several states'.<sup>853</sup> Importantly, unlike conservatives liberals had a tendency to think of Italy as a distinct realm. In January 1860 Gladstone was very concerned to prevent external, foreign intervention in central Italy, in the form of Austrian, Russian, or Prussian involvement. Only as an afterthought – a literal postscript in a letter to Russell – did Gladstone mention that Piedmont, too, was not to interfere in central Italy.<sup>854</sup> Furthermore, liberals were very willing to accept the annexation of the central Italian polities to Piedmont as the will of the Italian people. In April 1859, Gladstone had already written of 'the whole national sentiment of Italy' arranging itself behind Piedmont, as the champion of Italian liberty.<sup>855</sup> Despite the occasional verbal gesture of respect to the actual boundaries between states, in their concerns, initiatives, and ends liberals made a clear distinction between an Italian sphere, where the people shared a nationality and in which, as a whole, developments and progress could take place, and all states outside of Italy, whose interference in these Italian affairs would be a tampering with the expression of the will of the Italian nation. Liberals acted as if

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<sup>849</sup> When they did discuss the likelihood of unification, they primarily discussed Italian geography and its influence, rather than the desires and sentiments of its peoples. See Atkinson (1859: 352, 363); Cecil (1859: 11); Forsyth (1861: 166-7); Tremenheere (1859: 243-4).

<sup>850</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1862: 226) and *The Standard* in Urban (1938: 283).

<sup>851</sup> Lever (1863a: 580-1); Swayne (1856: 88-9); Tremenheere (1859: 261-2).

<sup>852</sup> Aytoun (1860: 253).

<sup>853</sup> Gladstone cited in Beales (1961: 34).

<sup>854</sup> Gladstone (1860, especially 99-101, 104); see also Beales (1854). See further Granville quoted in Beales (1961: 106).



morally speaking, the demarcation between the Italian nation and the rest of Europe, rather than those between existing states, was the salient distinction to make when considering the threat of external intervention in Italy.<sup>856</sup>

This respective affirmation and rejection of the principle of nationality informed the positions which liberals and conservatives took on particular Italian issues. In early 1860, liberals adopted the stance that the people of Italy should be left to decide their own future, without external intervention into their affairs, while conservatives thought that the fate of central Italy was properly a European question, ideally to be decided by a Congress of both those states directly involved in the issue and those states who were party to the relevant treaties which had ordered this area in the Vienna settlement.<sup>857</sup> Liberals hoped to avoid making the future of central Italy into a European rather than Italian affair, and were willing not to make an issue out of the French annexations of Savoy and Nice in return for a similar French treatment of Piedmont's expansion in Italy.<sup>858</sup>

As Piedmont meddled in and annexed first central and then south Italy, liberals argued that Britain should stand ready to protect these internal, Italian developments from external intervention at the hands of the forces of despotism. Conservatives, in contrast, remarked rather incredulously that liberals were calling on Britain to act against France and Austria from the principle of non-intervention, in defence of a series of acts by Piedmont which themselves were blatant instances of external intervention. Forsyth criticised Russell's position in the latter's October 1860 dispatch, arguing that 'the Government had preached to Austria and France the doctrine of non-intervention as the one sole principle to be observed by the Great Powers in the question of Italy', but that 'in the opinion of Lord John Russell, this doctrine of non-intervention did not apply to Garibaldi or Victor Emmanuel ... [who were] justified in interfering because he was an Italian patriot ... an Italian king. But letting this pass, it excluded all who were beyond the limits of that which was once called a "geographical expression" – Italy'.<sup>859</sup>

Forsyth's rejection of the principle of nationality played a central role in his argument: 'we cannot admit that Garibaldi was 'a patriot fighting for the independence of his country,' unless we assume that there was no difference between a subject of Sardinia and a subject of Naples, because both were Italians ... Will [Russell] venture to

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<sup>855</sup> Gladstone (1859: 553). See also McIntire (1983: 132-3, 225-6).

<sup>856</sup> See e.g. Russell (1859b) and Russell, cited in Beales (1961: 99-100).

<sup>857</sup> See e.g. Aytoun (1860: 248, 252). See also McIntire (1983: 93-4).

<sup>858</sup> Beales (1961: 134-5); Urban (1938: 387, 397, 427).

<sup>859</sup> Forsyth (1861: 148-9).

assert that community of language effaces distinction of country, or that, according to the doctrine of natural boundaries, geography is to determine citizenship and allegiance?<sup>860</sup> Forsyth subsequently argued for the priority of the established European order over the principle of nationality: 'The question ... is not as to the rights of subjects to resist, but the right of a stranger to interfere. But then it is alleged that Sardinia is not a stranger, because she is Italian; and that this gives her a title, which makes the case exceptional ... we cannot admit that Sardinia alone ... [is] to be held free from the obligations of international law'.<sup>861</sup>

To conservatives, Piedmont's meddling in the affairs of other Italian states and annexing them wholesale entailed the grossest, most blatant external intervention in the affairs of other states. Liberals, led by their assumption of Italian nationhood and endorsement of the principle of nationality, considered the events as part of the internal progressive development of Italy, and hoped to safeguard these auspicious developments from reactionary foreign intervention. Conservatives, lacking both these commitments, viewed the liberal position as one which fulminated against *potential* acts of external intervention, in order to safeguard a whole series of *actual* interventions in the affairs of other states on the part of Piedmont. Conservatives considered this a most pernicious precedent.

For Mill, too, the principle of nationality was crucial for the logic of his position on intervention. Mill argued that when the government of a polity was foreign, like Austria in Lombardy, or even when the government of a polity depended on the support of a foreign power, like those of the central Italian Duchies, then there existed a state of continual external intervention. Here Mill supposed the existence of a nationality and he considered this the entity which was to be sovereign, to decide on the configuration of its internal affairs without outside interference. For Mill and other liberals, the polities actually existing, let alone their governments, were secondary, and could only lay claim to a right to non-interference if they conformed to the wishes of their people.<sup>862</sup> Conservatives, in rejecting the principle of nationality, thought of the principle of non-interference as a simple injunction to respect the boundaries and accept the governments of the existing polities of the European sphere.

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<sup>860</sup> Forsyth (1861: 150, see also 166-7).

<sup>861</sup> Forsyth (1861: 154-5, 166-7).

<sup>862</sup> See Mill (1859); (1865). See also Varouxakis (2002b: 77-8, 85-6); (2013a: 95-6).

### The sentiment of nationality as a practical constraint on the extent of states

Some conservatives recognised the influence of the sentiment of nationality and the desire for self-determination of peoples, but as a practical — as distinct from ethical — constraint on the possible configuration of empires. The inconvenient ‘fact of its existence ... [of] the new-born enthusiasm of nationality’ could make for disloyal subjects domestically, and internationally for a neighbour intent on forcibly recovering ‘its’ territory.<sup>863</sup> Domestic discontent and a foreign desire for revenge were possible without any sentiment of nationality, but the latter, conservatives thought, intensified and prolonged these passions, to the extent that annexation might no longer be the sensible choice for statesmen to make.

The first problem which the sentiment of nationality could create for states was that of disaffected subject populations, or otherwise ‘disloyal’ parts of the population. They were a source of domestic instability and thus of state weakness.<sup>864</sup> Conservative commentators noted this phenomenon in a variety of contexts, from discussions of the lack of vigour of the Austrian Empire to the future relationship between North and South after the American civil war.<sup>865</sup> Oliphant in 1864 noted the troubles which Poland caused Russia, Hungary caused Austria, and Holstein caused Denmark.<sup>866</sup> Patterson similarly remarked regarding the Polish Question that Russia was unable to gain the loyalty of the Polish people – ‘a cordial union of Poland (with an autonomy) and Russia under the sceptre of the Czar seems to be hopeless’ – while repeated rebellions put the stability of the whole empire in danger.<sup>867</sup> Commenting on Prussia's intention to annex the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine in 1870-71, Cecil was one of several conservative authors who argued that annexation would merely saddle Prussia with intractable problems – and that it was exactly the sentiment of nationality which made these problems intractable.<sup>868</sup>

Cecil started with the observation ‘that the French sentiment is intense among

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<sup>863</sup> Cecil (1870: 552). See also e.g. Cecil (1864a: 239); Oliphant (1864a: 390-1, 396); (1864b: 504, 506).

<sup>864</sup> Cecil (1870: 549); Dasent (1870: 315); Patterson (1864a: 132).

<sup>865</sup> On the paralysis of the Austrian Empire as a result of the strongly divided opinion of the Slav and Magyar parts of its population, see Cowell (1877h: 621); Frere (1876: 490-1, 501); Hamley (1877f: 634; 1878a: 111-2); Lever (1869: 361-2); Shand (1878: 751-2); see also Cowell (1876c: 462; 1878j: 499-501); Craik (1878b: 260-1, 284); Russell (1877: 211).

On the disaffected South as likely an enduring thorn in the side of the North, even when conquered, see Cecil (1862: 537); (1865: 280-1); Fremantle (1863: 389); Patterson (1862a: 636); Mackay (1866b: 641); Ross (1865a: 26).

<sup>866</sup> Oliphant (1864a: 389).

<sup>867</sup> Patterson (1864a: 120-4).

<sup>868</sup> See Cecil (1870: 540, 543, 551-2); Dasent (1870: 313); Hamley (1871c: 493); Lever (1870c: 511); Oliphant (1864b: 511).

the population'.<sup>869</sup> And while in previous times one could have expected the people to switch their allegiance to Prussia over time – these people had in the past been part of a (very different) Germany, after all, and were now staunchly French – with the modern sentiment of nationality, such a shift in loyalty was unlikely to take place.<sup>870</sup> Instilled and maintained artificially by teachers and publicists, the sentiment of nationality made that any disaffection on the part of subject populations would linger, that their loyalty would persistently be in doubt.<sup>871</sup> Alsace and Lorraine would not, Cecil concluded, be a source of strength to Prussia, with its population restive and loyal to another state, and would even come to impair the governance of Germany as a whole.<sup>872</sup> The sentiment of nationality, conservatives thought, had made any conquest and annexation a decidedly less attractive proposition, and put firm constraints on the worthwhile extent of any polity.

Conservatives did not always, however, frame state weakness following from a diversity of communities in terms of nationality. They preferred a perspective which privileged the institutional and political realms, as was evident in their discussion of the Ottoman Empire during the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78. The Ottoman Empire, like empires in general, differed from European states in that it was not politically integrated and homogeneous – it had 'all her confusedly mixed institutions and usages'.<sup>873</sup> The crucial difference lay in political institutions – conservatives did not think in the categories of nationhood or identity. The Ottoman political system, conservatives argued, was less efficient and capable, less able to mobilise the country's resources, than the politically — not ethnically — homogeneous system present in European states, where all were citizens of the state on the same terms, all under the rule of the state's law.<sup>874</sup> As a consequence, the Ottoman Empire's neighbours had become too powerful, inducing instability as internal factions tried to leverage this external power for their own gain.<sup>875</sup> The Ottoman Empire would need to end its internal political

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<sup>869</sup> Cecil (1870: 547).

<sup>870</sup> See also Patterson (1864a: 128), arguing that in the past, when 'the modern principle of nationality was unknown ... populations readily united or parted according to any changes in the persons or fortunes of their rulers [sic]'. See further Lever (1870c: 510-1) for another formulation of this argument.

<sup>871</sup> Cecil (1864a: 237-40); (1870: 548-9); Patterson (1864a: 120).

<sup>872</sup> Cecil (1870: 549-50).

<sup>873</sup> Craik (1878b: 285). See also Craik (1878b: 261); Palgrave (1878: 550-1). The British Empire was an exception to this rule, having exactly the necessary 'coherence between its several parts, a recognised code of discipline, due gradation of authority, and one acknowledged head' (Clerke 1878: 255).

<sup>874</sup> Cowell (1876a: 89; 1876d: 639; 1878g: 121); Craik (1878b: 284-5); Craik and Smith (1877: 277, 303); Hamley (1877d: 362; Frere (1876: 506); Palgrave (1878: 565, 569-70); Smith and Cowell (1877: 591-2); Smith and Layard (1877: 306).

<sup>875</sup> Cowell (1877h: 611; 1878j: 504-6); Hamley (1877c: 251; 1878b: 242-3).

fragmentation. The solution to the Eastern Question was not national self-determination for the European provinces, but reform of the empire through a conservative adaptation of institutions to their changed environment.<sup>876</sup>

The second problem which the sentiment of nationality could create for a state was that of a neighbouring country with a persistent desire to recover territories lost to it. Discussing the possible cession of Alsace and Lorraine in 1870, conservatives argued that annexation would guarantee Germany another war with France. The other peace terms were relatively inconsequential and would quickly be forgotten – ask only them and Germany could be at peace. But demand territory, conservatives predicted, and a passion for revenge would simmer in France, leading to renewed conflict at the earliest opportunity.<sup>877</sup> Conservatives did not themselves affirm the indivisibility of a country's territory, but they did recognise that elements of the general populace, infused with the sentiment of nationality, would perceive their country's territory thus. These people would consequently persist in looking for an opportunity to go to war and recover the lost lands.

Just as the sentiment of nationality ensured that a subject people would not come to accept their new state, the sentiment would also, conservatives thought, keep the passion for revenge aflame. This becomes evident through a comparison of Hamley's opinion with that of Cecil. Unlike Cecil, Hamley did not consider the sentiment of nationality when reflecting on the French desire for revenge and, as a consequence, he painted this desire as potentially far more transient. He thought the cycle of revenge might be broken, as long as 'opportunity [for revenge] will not occur until ... new interests, new relations, new distributions of power ... wear out the bitter grudge'.<sup>878</sup> Cecil, in contrast, thought that the abstract nature of the sentiment of nationality, with its ideal, essentialist sense of national boundaries, could keep the flame of revenge burning for generations. He remarked that 'we know what the modern sentiment of nationality, worked up by popular literature, can do. The French youth will be brought up by countless teachers to long for the lost provinces'.<sup>879</sup>

Some conservative commentators consequently did discern a role for the sentiment of nationality and the desire for self-determination in international politics. This was not a normative role as a basic right of peoples, however, but merely a

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<sup>876</sup> Cowell (1877e: 640); Palgrave (1878: 568-9, 579, 582, 587-8); Smith and Layard (1877: 308-10).

<sup>877</sup> Cecil (1870: 544, 551-5); Dasent (1870: 309-311, 318); Gleig (1870b: 663); Lever (1870c: 511-2); Wilson (1871b: 370).

<sup>878</sup> Hamley (1871a: 255)

<sup>879</sup> Cecil (1870: 551).

practical role as a cause of conflict and constraint on the possible configuration of empires.

### **The sentiment of nationality and liberty and patriotism**

Conservatives argued not only that nationalists and separatists lacked a valid normative underpinning for their endeavours, but also that their abstract ideals hindered the advancement of those goods of which conservatives could recognise the value, namely constitutional liberty and patriotic loyalty to institutions. Whereas liberals tended to assume that all these values were closely connected and that progress would be general across all fronts, conservatives countered that the sentiment of nationality and demand for self-determination could put the causes of liberty and patriotism in jeopardy – thereby implying that liberals, if they truly valued liberty and patriotism, would rescind their approval of the principle of nationality and their support for demands for self-determination.<sup>880</sup> Conservative commentators admonished liberals that they sympathised only with groups arguing from 'an ideal basis' and proposing 'revolutionary measures'.<sup>881</sup> The principle of nationality was an absolute idea, could not admit the possibility of compromise, and consequently could not recognise or value established rights, incremental improvements in liberty, or a limited autonomy providing the institutional trappings of patriotism.<sup>882</sup>

For conservatives, separatism was wrong exactly because its patriotism involved the nation and with it the desire for self-determination. For the radically liberal British Positivists, patriotism was admirable exactly when it involved nationalism. Harrison argued that 'it is for us to insist how precious to the life of the world are these growing aggregates of people when the lofty conception of nation first comes to supersede the narrower idea of clan or tribe'.<sup>883</sup> Varouxakis concludes that 'the implication is that the Positivists ... respected all patriotisms' – all patriotisms which were based in a focus on the people, on nationality, as this shift from the local to the national was what made

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<sup>880</sup> Lord Acton, perhaps best described as a cosmopolitan Whiggish Catholic, argued in his famous article on Nationality (1862: 15, 17, 19-20) that the principle of nationality did not inherently further the end of liberty and would jeopardise both the progress of civilisation (by making impossible the crucial 'combination of different nations in one state') and a 'civilised' patriotic attachment to the 'political nation', replaced by the 'animal' or 'instinctive' attachment to the 'race'.

<sup>881</sup> Oliphant (1864a: 390-1).

<sup>882</sup> Dasent (1870: 296; see also 297). See also e.g. Patterson (1864a: 131). Conservatives here employed what Hirschman (1991: 81, 84) has characterised as the 'jeopardy thesis', the argument that 'a new reform, if carried out, would mortally endanger an older, highly prized one'.

<sup>883</sup> Harrison (1908: 256), also quoted in Varouxakis (2006b: 110).

them valuable.<sup>884</sup> Conservatives, in contrast, held that any patriotism which involved nationalism would quickly, in its focus on the nation and its self-determination, marginalise any concern for those institutions which conservatives considered the proper focus of patriotic sentiment.

In the case of the American civil war, this conservative perspective implied, uncommonly, sympathy with the separatists. While conservatives did not involve the notions of nation or nationality in their discussions, they were full of praise for the patriotism of the Southerners, noting how 'the Southern States have given ample proof of their courage, ability, and devotion to the cause of their independence'.<sup>885</sup> Conservative commentators were less enthusiastic about the North's patriotism, arguing either that it was lacking altogether, with the Northern populace trying to avoid enlistment – Fremantle witnessed and was sure to mention the draft riots in New York in July 1863<sup>886</sup> – or that their patriotism was wrapped up in the prestige of the Union, democracy, and the general notion of American exceptionalism.<sup>887</sup> This debased patriotism was then the cause of the delusional tenacity with which the North continued the war and worsened its means, long after it ought to have sued for peace and recognised the South. Conservatives admired the patriotism of the South, with its self-sacrifice, and they derided the patriotism of the North, with its close connection to the sentiment of national unity and its exultation in institutions which conservatives disliked. This contrast in patriotisms, they thought, was yet another reason to favour Southern victory and independence.

Italy, Poland, and the Danish Duchies affair were the main debates where conservatives emphasised the perverse effects of striving after the principle of nationality for the values of liberty and institutional reform. To the limited extent that conservatives concerned themselves with the future of Italy itself, they expressed a desire for reform within its existing politics and established treaties, rather than for independence or unification. Importantly, they invariably noted that the main obstacle to reform was not Austria, but 'the wicked dogma of the extreme revolutionary party', agitating for national independence, which left Austria no choice but repressive rule.<sup>888</sup>

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<sup>884</sup> Varouxakis (2006b: 110)

<sup>885</sup> Patterson (1862a: 637). See also Beresford Hope (1862: 23-24, 35-36, 96); (1863: 4); Bourke (1861: 758-9); (1862: 352); Cecil (1862: 537, 563-4); (1865: 250); Ferguson (1861: 774-7); Fitzgerald Ross (1864: 660); Fremantle (1863: 389); Hamley (1861b: 402); (1863b: 636-7); (1863c: 764); Wolseley (1863: 17, 24).

<sup>886</sup> Fremantle (1863: 393-4).

<sup>887</sup> Beresford Hope (1862: 23-24, 35-36, 96); Hamley (1862a: 120, 123); (1862b: 534); Wolseley (1863: 10).

<sup>888</sup> Swayne (1856: 87-8). See also Atkinson (1859: 350-1, 355, 361, 364); Aytoun (1860: 247-8); Cecil (1859: 4, 27); Forsyth (1861: 154, 171); Patterson (1862c: 525); Tremenheere (1859: 268); White (1861).

Conservatives further argued that the principle of nationality distracted people from more worthwhile endeavours. In the various Italian states the sentiment of nationality led people to reject the authority of their *de facto* government and to 'dwell either in memory or imagination', rather than to pursue practical, local reforms of administration.<sup>889</sup> Cecil complained of the 'obtuseness ... [and] confusion ... engendered by that strange mania for ideal nationalities which is the moral epidemic of the age, and which appears to have the power of overshadowing all substantial grievances'.<sup>890</sup> Conservatives considered the nationalist movement in Italy a distraction for its peoples at best, and the main cause of their repression at worst.

Patterson, Oliphant, and Cecil all commented in 1864 upon annexation, separatism, and nationalist sentiment, in the context of the Polish Question and Danish Duchies affair. The tenor running through their arguments was that nationalists were too absolute in their demands. The separatists were wholly focused on independence and pursued this end at the cost of liberty, autonomy, and the institutional trappings of their (erstwhile) polity, all the latter of which would be better realised if only the separatists could countenance compromise.

Conservatives thought that the established power, by virtue of being established, could expect to be reasoned with by disaffected parts of its population, rather than wholly rejected. Even if a territory had initially been 'unjustly acquired', Patterson argued – as Russia's Poland had been – after the conquering state had institutionally integrated the territory into the whole country, the conquering Power 'cannot be expected to cede it', either to another state or to secession.<sup>891</sup> The problem with separatism based in the sentiment of nationality, Patterson argued, was that it could only conceive of independence as its end. If separatists were willing to grant their loyalty in return for concessions, then Russia could feel comfortable granting the occupied populace significant liberty, autonomy, and the institutions which were the focus of the people's patriotism – in the case of Poland its Diet, army, and fortresses. But since nationalist separatists did not care about the character or quality of government, only about the identity of it, 'reconciliation becomes impracticable, and a cordial union ... hopeless'. Separatists consequently forced the state into a choice between allowing the territory to secede and practising an 'iron despotism'. The latter alternative was abhorrent, Patterson affirmed, but it was also 'the natural consequence' of separatism;

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<sup>889</sup> Atkinson (1859: 361).

<sup>890</sup> Cecil (1859: 4).

<sup>891</sup> Patterson (1864a: 120).



'what other course could [the ruler] follow?'<sup>892</sup>

While Cecil and Oliphant were not as quick to absolve statesmen of censure over their repressive rule, they shared Patterson's assessment of the character of nationalist separatism – of its absolute aim and the dangerous extremes to which this attitude led. Cecil remarked that the separatists in Holstein unequivocally rejected Danish rule, even when constitutional reform meant that Danish citizens would be 'enjoying a liberty with which they are little acquainted' in the neighbouring German polities.<sup>893</sup> The sentiment of nationality cared not for the 'reconciliation of conflicting interests ... [or] attainment of constitutional liberty', those proper 'modest objects of desire'.<sup>894</sup> 'How impossible it is', Oliphant grumbled, 'to devise a form of government which shall satisfy a people whose sole aspiration is separation', since 'unfortunately there is no amount of political liberty which will satisfy the sentiment of national independence, which is in most instances unreasonable; ... people would rather govern themselves badly than let other people govern them well'.<sup>895</sup>

For the British Liberal party, the conceit that they were the champion of the cause of constitutional liberty in Europe was a central tenet of their self-image and their political vocabulary.<sup>896</sup> Conservatives consequently tried to suggest that British liberal supporters of the German national and democratic movement were willing to sacrifice liberty and constitutional principles for the principle of nationality.<sup>897</sup> The liberals would either have to re-conceive of their role in Europe, relinquishing their identity as the champion of constitutional liberty, or they had to renounce the sentiment of nationality and movements for self-determination.

For conservatives, the crucial factor in matters of annexation and separatism was the emotional nature of the sentiment of nationality. This meant an absolutist politics with little scope for compromise or settlement, which would fail to further the values of liberty and patriotism. As a consequence, while conservatives were generally sceptical of the benefits of annexation, they also lacked sympathy for separatist or nationalist movements, let alone argued that ethics put these movements in the right.

Even effective secession and the granting of self-determination could, conservatives argued, be a curse for a people, rather than a blessing. Some people would

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<sup>892</sup> Patterson (1864a: 121-4).

<sup>893</sup> Cecil (1864a: 271; see also 270-273).

<sup>894</sup> Cecil (1864a: 239). See also Cecil (1864a: 239-40, 242, 248, 262, 265, 267-8, 270-1, 275); Oliphant (1864a: 391-2); Patterson (1864a: 129-30, 132); (1864b: 128-9).

<sup>895</sup> Oliphant (1864a: 388, 396); (1864b: 504); see also Cecil (1870: 548); Lever (1869: 362).

<sup>896</sup> See Parry (2006).

be better off as safely part of an empire. Discussing the Ottoman Empire, conservatives argued that there were two goods which an empire provided and which would be lost were it to disintegrate. Firstly, an empire had the role of ruling the various ethnic and religious groups living throughout its territory.<sup>898</sup> Conservatives argued that these groups, if given free rein, would in fact harass each other more than the Ottomans oppressed them. The Ottoman Empire was all that stood 'between its subject races and the fearful misery incident to a race-struggle and a religious war'.<sup>899</sup> Secondly, collecting multiple peoples in an empire made it possible to have a polity powerful enough to be independent. Conservatives here invoked precedent; Greece, Serbia and Romania had separated from the Ottoman Empire but had never really become sovereign states. And just like Serbia and Romania, conservatives argued, any newly created autonomous states in south-eastern Europe would just fall under the domination of Russia.<sup>900</sup> Empire secured order and independence, neither of which self-determination would provide.

Conservatives thus deployed two variants of a jeopardy argument against the sentiment of nationality and self-determination. One was aimed at liberals in particular and argued that the sentiment of nationality advanced at the cost of constitutional liberty – which liberals also professed to value and which they assumed progressed in tandem with self-determination. Conservatives rejected this assumption and implied that if one really valued liberty, one would renounce the sentiment of nationality. The second jeopardy argument entailed that the sentiment of nationality made it impossible for a people to retain, when part of an empire, those institutions valued by a “proper” patriotism, or, when seceded, even their independence. The abstract idea of nationality, conservatives argued, endangered the real, valuable achievements of liberty and patriotism.

### Conclusion

Notions of nationality did not play a major role in conservative commentators' comprehension of their world. Liberals for instance drew heavily on the concept of national character in their attempts to make sense of the start, course, and conclusion of

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<sup>897</sup> See e.g. Oliphant (1864a: 385-6).

<sup>898</sup> Frere (1876: 483); Craik and Smith (1877: 277); Palgrave (1878: 550-1); Smith (1876: 555-8).

<sup>899</sup> This strife was not primarily the result of a general incompatibility between Muslims and Christians, but rather of the different factions trying to retain or increase their local influence and power. See e.g. Smith and Cowell (1877: 576-8).

<sup>900</sup> Cowell (1877a: 108); Frere (1876: 494-6); Hamley (1877b: 131; 1877d: 363; 1878b: 242-3); Northcote

the Franco-Prussian war, and they invoked the idea of national communities and the principle of nationality when considering the impetus for and significance of the unification of Germany. Conservatives, in contrast, made sense of these events without according much significance to nationality. They did so first of all because they felt they had no need for the notion in order to comprehend events. Their established scheme of interpretation, with its focus on statesmen and ambition as focused on the interests and glory of countries, still provided plausible explanations of the impetus and significance of events. Secondly, they had no strong sense that a national community either existed or was desirable; it was not a *fait accompli* which had to be accommodated in their conceptual scheme. In fact, conservatives positively disapproved of the notion of nationality; both its reality in effecting a detrimental homogenisation of society, and its idea in providing an excuse for war and marginalising the values of constitutional liberty and patriotic loyalty towards institutions. The only sense in which, some conservatives conceded, nationality was incontrovertibly present, was as a sentiment among parts of the people, merely providing demagogues with yet another strategy of justification for acts aimed at aggrandisement and martial glory.

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(1878: 359); Palgrave (1878: 550-1); Smith (1876: 555-8); Smith and Cowell (1877: 584).

## VI. Liminal groups and figures: Conservative thought and the wider intellectual landscape

The previous chapters already related conservative thought to the interlocutors which they imagined for themselves; most commonly their targets consisted of a conflation of radical and Gladstonian liberal positions. That comparison alone, however, gives too much of a sense of difference; reality wasn't as Manichean as conservative commentators presented it. This chapter shows how conservative international thought was firmly embedded in and interconnected with the wider landscape of Victorian international thought. It will do so through a study of two strands of thought liminal to Victorian conservatism: the international thought of Whigs and of "hard-headed" liberals.

The first strand of liberal international thought with clear affinities to conservative thought treated here is Whig thought, the world-views of the old establishment. The study of Whig international thought is an apt means through which to place conservative thought in the context of Victorian international thought more generally. Whig opinion was a feature of the Victorian intellectual landscape self-consciously distinct from conservative opinion, being propagated through different channels and being connected to the rival political party. At the same time, while distinct, it was more or less close to conservative thought on the spectrum of Victorian opinion, which for instance saw radical commentators rhetorically tarring Whigs with the Tory brush.

The second strand of liberal international thought which is helpful for our purposes is that of the burgeoning newly educated classes, as represented by the *Saturday Review*. The *Saturday* held a prominent and prestigious place in the landscape of Victorian periodicals, self-consciously representing the cream of the metropolitan educated classes. While it was not politically partisan, the paper is generally presented in the historiography as moderately conservative, especially on social issues and on reform.<sup>901</sup> The *Saturday* is however presented here as liminal to mainstream conservatism, because even though the *Saturday* ended up taking a conservative position on many domestic social and political issues, and even though it might have seemed like a bastion of principled conservatism to a radical Liberal intellectual such as J.S. Mill,

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<sup>901</sup> Bevington (1941: 35, 54-5, 58-9, 65-74, 76, 118, 266, 323, 337); Collini (1991: 280-2); Koss (1981: 185). Most of the paper's more emphatically Liberal contributors, such as Harcourt and Goldwin Smith, had left by 1860. Their articles are excluded from this study, as are several written by Cecil in the mid-1860s.

many of its prominent contributors affirmed liberal values.<sup>902</sup> They considered themselves hard-headed liberals, in contrast to both the sentimental radicals such as Mill and the aristocratic Whigs.

An analysis of Whig and 'hard-headed' liberal thought on international affairs, of their overlap and difference with the perspective of conservatives, consequently provides us with important insights into both the distinctive elements of conservative international thought, and the aspects of conservative thought which found wider purchase in Victorian Britain.

### **The Whig perspective on international relations:**

#### **The international thought of Henry Reeve, 1854-1880**

Henry Reeve (1813-1895) suggests himself as an exemplar of Whig thought. Reeve was one of the most prominent and enduring commentators on international affairs in Victorian Britain. He also explicitly positioned himself as a Whig in the political landscape, 'between the two extremes' of Tories and radical or advanced Liberals.<sup>903</sup> Reeve's influence was the result of his positions as premier foreign affairs correspondent for *The Times* (1840-55) and as long-standing editor of and contributor to the *Edinburgh Review* (1855-95).<sup>904</sup> In addition, Reeve cultivated close relationships with prominent Whig politicians and maintained a 'prolific correspondence with the great figures of European politics and culture', with whom he had a convenient 'habit of forming lasting friendships'.<sup>905</sup>

In his commentary on international affairs, Reeve was first of all concerned to prevent the Liberal party's 'deviation, from the moderate liberal principles which we term Whig, to the extreme liberal principles which we term Radical'.<sup>906</sup> As a consequence he mostly argued against the positions taken by advanced liberals and radicals such as Gladstone, Cobden, and Bright, and showed little direct engagement with conservative commentators.<sup>907</sup>

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<sup>902</sup> Mill (1860: 667-8). Mill nevertheless emphasised repeatedly that the *Saturday* was worthwhile reading, see e.g. Mill (1860: 661, 664, 673, 680).

<sup>903</sup> Reeve (1880: 257-60). He supported Palmerston and Russell, and later Hartington, while he came to reject Gladstone by the early 1870s. See Reeve (1863: 269); (1874: 557, 561-3); (1876b: 571). See further Broughton (2004); Koss (1981: 72, 82); Parry (2006: 422).

<sup>904</sup> The *Edinburgh Review* was the flagship moderate liberal periodical, counterpart of the conservative *Quarterly Review*.

<sup>905</sup> Broughton (2004). Few of Reeve's letters have survived, however (Johnson 1924; Laughton 1898). On his friendships, including with sometime foreign secretary Lord Clarendon; see Broughton (2004) and Laughton (1898: 325).

<sup>906</sup> Reeve (1874: 560); see also Reeve (1866: 275); (1874: 557, 560-3); (1876b: 538); (1880: 257-60).

<sup>907</sup> Reeve can usefully be seen as an establishment liberal who consistently opposed those more radical

The international thought of Reeve and of conservatives contained two fundamental differences, both clearly linked to the established Whig—Tory divide. Firstly, regarding the domestic genesis of foreign policy, Reeve prescribed the primacy of Parliament in setting foreign policy, as distinct from conservative primacy of statesmen and executive. Secondly, Reeve envisioned the potential progress of civilisation in international affairs, through supplanting the rule of force with the rule of international law. Conservatives were emphatically not committed to any notion of progress in the international sphere and thought of the treaty system as embedded in the primacy of force, rather than offering an alternative ordering principle for international relations.

There also existed, though, two significant areas of agreement between Reeve and conservatives. Both valued the Treaty of Vienna, if for different reasons, and disapproved of the principle of nationality. These two commitments were crucial in leading Reeve into a darkly pessimistic assessment of the state of international relations over the 1860s and especially 1870s, in contrast to more optimistic advanced liberals. Whig international political thought was fundamentally distinct from that of conservatives, but the two could still converge in particular assessments of international affairs, especially when confronted with radical alternatives.

### **I. The genesis of foreign policy: statesmen, Parliament, and the public**

Reeve's thoughts on the proper role of statesmen, Parliament, and the public in setting foreign policy were markedly different from those of conservative commentators, reflecting long-standing differences between Whigs and Tories. Reeve imagined a curated role for the public and gave primacy to Parliament, rather than to statesmen and an independent executive.

Unlike conservatives, Reeve thought that the general public had a role to play in setting foreign policy. Discussing the country's dissection of the war effort in 1855, Reeve approvingly noted that '[t]he whole country participates in the contest, and lends its intelligence and its resources to the army'.<sup>908</sup> Public deliberation on past and future policy helped to improve Britain's foreign policy by allowing for novel reasoning and insight to be applied. In particular, such public scrutiny of possible and actual government policy helped to preserve peace. Whereas in autocratic states 'war itself might be resolved upon in the secret mind of a single individual', in a more open system

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liberal voices represented in Taylor's *Troublemakers* (1957).

'war was avoided by the publicity and freedom of debate ... by the force of argument and the might of public opinion'.<sup>909</sup> Through public debate, Reeve thought, 'the aggregate intelligence of the nation criticises and controls [the ruling class]'.<sup>910</sup>

Reeve here adopted the common liberal assumption that autocratic rulers were more likely to steer a country into war than the general public was. In discussing the likely foreign policy of France, for instance, Reeve emphasised repeatedly that the general populace of France was 'averse to war' and functioned as a restraint on the sometimes 'warlike' Napoleon III.<sup>911</sup> Conservatives on the other hand often asserted the reasoned nature of the decisions which statesmen would make, generally implying the avoidance of war, and contrasted this with the passionate pleas of the public, which could for no proper reason force a country into conflict.

The exact character of 'popular influence' was, however, an issue for Reeve. The criticism and control exerted by public feeling and debate on a state's foreign policy was only valuable, Reeve thought, if it were based on 'progressive reasoning'.<sup>912</sup> Raw popular influence on policy would merely be the rule of sentiment and passion, and of this Reeve strenuously disapproved. When discussing, for instance, both the North in the American Civil War and the role of Bismarck's Prussia in Germany, Reeve argued that the unchecked 'passions of the populace' had led to the North's abrasive attitude in international affairs and had made possible, under the guise of realising the Germans' sentiment of nationality, Prussia's grand course of territorial aggrandisement.<sup>913</sup> Reeve similarly condemned as merely sentimental the Bulgarian Agitation of 1876.<sup>914</sup> Disraeli's foreign policy, too, pandered to '[a] somewhat vulgar and often misplaced sentiment', which had informed his policy from making the Queen Empress of India, to buying the Suez shares, sending Indian troops to Malta, and establishing a British naval base on Cyprus.<sup>915</sup>

Public participation, Reeve concluded, ought to be filtered and guided, so as to ensure it worked through reason and for progress.<sup>916</sup> The institution par excellence to adopt this role, and to involve itself more directly in steering the government's foreign policy, was Parliament. Reeve consequently expressed a qualified support for Reform in

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<sup>908</sup> Reeve (1855a: 281).

<sup>909</sup> Reeve (1859b: 591).

<sup>910</sup> Reeve (1855c: 487).

<sup>911</sup> Reeve (1867: 270) and (1859b: 559, 591-2);

<sup>912</sup> Reeve (1863: 269, see also 266-7).

<sup>913</sup> Reeve (1862: 286-7). See also (1861b: 569, 580); (1866: 283).

<sup>914</sup> Reeve (1876b: 537); (1876c: 248); (1877a: 264, 266); (1877c: 559); (1877d: 257); (1879: 283).

<sup>915</sup> Reeve (1879: 286). See also Reeve (1878b: 558-61); (1879: 283).

1860s Britain. Through reform the energy of the “popular class” would get channelled through Parliament and be properly curated.

Reeve had little to complain about the role played by Parliament for most of the period analysed here. He addressed the issue explicitly only during the Eastern Question in the late 1870s, when the Conservative party was in power and radicals formed an extra-parliamentary movement. Reeve rejected the Bulgarian Agitation as exactly the kind of passion-driven popular involvement which ought to be avoided. He blamed politicians such as Gladstone and Bright for side-lining Parliament, which he considered the proper venue for judgement of the government's policy.<sup>917</sup> Reeve criticised the government, too, for minimising the influence of Parliament on its foreign policy. He disapproved of Disraeli and thought that the latter's policy was 'essentially novel and unparliamentary ... [in] a very strong exercise of the executive powers of the Crown', which impaired the quality of Britain's foreign policy; 'If we were living under the old traditions of the British Constitution, or under the strict restraint of modern Parliamentary government', Reeve argued, 'many of the surprising events which we have recently witnessed would probably not have occurred'.<sup>918</sup> Only an 'ambitious and aggressive nation' would want to limit Parliament's involvement in setting foreign policy.<sup>919</sup> Britain was not such a nation and, Reeve implied, Disraeli should not try to turn it into one. Parliament ought consequently, Reeve thought, to be intimately involved in policy-making, curbing the excesses of both the passionate general public and an unrestrained executive.

Reeve also discussed how foreign states came to decide on their foreign policy. In these analyses, Reeve emphasised the importance of the country's institutional structure, rather than its national character or its statesmen — the preferred explanations of respectively advanced liberals and conservatives — in determining the likely tone of its foreign policy.<sup>920</sup> Reflecting on the likely attitude of Germany when unified under Prussian hegemony, Reeve argued both in 1866 and in 1871 that German foreign policy would be either good or bad for Britain and Europe, depending wholly on whether Germany's political institutions would be liberal or autocratic. In 1866 Reeve wrote that 'we have certainly nothing to apprehend from the increasing power and influence of Germany, when that power is exercised under the control of

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<sup>916</sup> Reeve (1865: 266-7, 269).

<sup>917</sup> Reeve (1876b: 537, 567-8); (1877a: 265).

<sup>918</sup> Reeve (1878b: 558-61). See also Reeve (1878d: 260-1); (1879: 284).

<sup>919</sup> Reeve (1878b: 561).

<sup>920</sup> See for instance on Russia Reeve (1854b: 430, 424-5, 433, 451).



parliamentary government' and again in 1871 he reiterated that 'We have no fear at all of the power of Germany, if we are satisfied that it will henceforth be exercised under the strict control of a free popular government; ... [of] the Federal Parliament or Diet.'<sup>921</sup> Reeve furthermore predicted that under an autocratic state, lacking an assertive, independent parliament, the Germans would choose to pursue military glory rather than their characteristic peaceful accomplishments.<sup>922</sup> Germany's attitude in international relations, whether moderate or aggressive, would be determined, Reeve assumed, by whether the country's political institutions would be organised along liberal constitutional or autocratic lines.

Reeve's Whig antecedents consequently closely influenced his thoughts on the proper genesis of foreign policy, mandating a prominent role for Parliament and a clear constraint on the free action of statesmen and the Crown, as favoured by conservative commentators.

## **II. The progress of civilisation in international relations and the centrality of international law**

Reeve's second fundamental difference from conservative international thought came in his commitment to the cause of progress in international affairs. Most aspects of Reeve's perspective on the possible motivations and attitudes of states in international relations matched that of conservative commentators. The main difference between them lay in their sense of what a moderate attitude towards international affairs entailed. For conservatives this meant that a state would prevent the slide of Europe into a general war, by working to sustain order and stability. For Reeve a similar commitment to peace between the great powers was tethered to fostering respect for public law and to working for the progress of civilisation in international relations.

Reeve thought that Europe had seen a significant increase of civilisation from the end of the Napoleonic Wars onwards. International relations, however, had not progressed similarly. The time had come, Reeve argued in 1854, for international relations 'to meet the wants of a progressive age, and to apply to these delicate questions the more humane and temperate maxims which have happily prevailed in every other branch of public affairs'.<sup>923</sup> Reeve maintained this normative concern for progress throughout the period analysed here, still arguing in 1876 for 'the adoption of

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<sup>921</sup> Reeve (1866: 283-4) and (1871c: 481, 483-4).

<sup>922</sup> Reeve (1871c: 471).

<sup>923</sup> Reeve (1854c: 197).

principles ... in harmony with the changes and progressive spirit of our times'.<sup>924</sup> A major change took place, however, in Reeve's perception of the realisation of such progress. Until 1863, Reeve was optimistic about the spread of civilisation in the international sphere. After 1863, with the behaviour of first Prussia and then Russia, Reeve's mood turned sour and he perceived a re-barbarisation of international relations.

The following analysis will firstly unpack Reeve's notion of progress. It will then argue that the first conservative element of his international thought was his rejection of the principle of nationality; progress did not imply the creation of nation-states. Reeve's second major conservative strand was his commitment to the Treaty of Vienna. Finally, this analysis will convey how his concept of progress and these two conservative elements combined to lead Reeve to his distinctly pessimistic outlook over the 1860s and especially 1870s.

#### Reeve's notion of the progress of civilisation

Reeve's notion of progress in international relations denoted both a general attitude among states and particular areas in need of improvement. Generally speaking, all countries, Reeve thought, should be enlightened enough to refrain from pressing their narrow self-interest whenever it impinged on 'the general interest of the world'.<sup>925</sup> This would make possible the rule of law, rather than force, in international affairs. The particulars of the progress of civilisation were, for Reeve, mostly related to the limitation of war, both in instance and extent; the spread of constitutional liberty; and an increased prosperity and freedom of trade.<sup>926</sup>

Reeve extolled respect for public law among states because he thought this made possible a different kind of international relations. For conservatives the treaty system was important as well, but because it gave durability to settlements based on a balance of power and so fostered stability and order in the international sphere. For Reeve the promise of international law was more significant, more fundamental. It was 'designed to substitute the humane provisions of public law and mutual faith, for the brutal operations of military force'.<sup>927</sup> It could provide an *alternative* 'governing principle' for international relations, a more civilised way for states to relate to each other, 'something higher than accident and force ... the rule of right'.<sup>928</sup> Such an 'enlightened

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<sup>924</sup> Reeve 1876a: 369).

<sup>925</sup> Reeve (1859b: 573).

<sup>926</sup> Reeve (1855a: 286, 289-90); (1855b: 579, 581, 584-5, 592); (1866: 296, 298); (1874: 563).

<sup>927</sup> Reeve (1860b: 550-1).

<sup>928</sup> Reeve (1862: 259).

respect for the principles of international law, and for the rights of others' not only prevented the rule of force, with its obvious benefits of fewer conflicts and protection for small states, but also prevented international affairs from being regulated by accident.<sup>929</sup> Only respect for public law enabled a steady course of progress in the international sphere, rather than mere neutral or deleterious change. Where for conservatives treaties took the edges off a system based on force, for Reeve law and force were two different dynamics of international relations.

International law could only effect the progress of civilisation if it was matched with the right attitude among states, 'the more enlightened conscience of nations', which specifically meant 'a more dispassionate consideration of the rights of others, aided by a more enlightened perception of our own national interests'.<sup>930</sup> 'There is no greater mark of the progress of reason and civilisation', Reeve argued, 'than the fact that on many important questions, this consent has triumphed over national jealousies and particular interests, and has established some few rules and maxims for the common benefit of humanity'.<sup>931</sup> Countries ought to take a cooperative stance in international affairs aimed at the progress of all, rather than an adversarial stance aimed at the aggrandisement of the state itself.

But neither was Reeve's perspective to be equated with a position like Gladstone's instantiation of a universal morality. Reeve emphasised that he did not aim to found international law 'upon the abstract ground of natural justice and equity; ... we are not tempted ... to quit the beaten track of legal tradition and political expediency'.<sup>932</sup> Reeve criticised the Positivists, for instance, for their apparent suggestion that moral commitments could take the place of a treaty system: 'In place of those positive obligations, on which the maintenance of peace and order depends', Reeve stated, 'they would substitute an ill-defined allegiance to the idea of Humanity'.<sup>933</sup> States needed to have the right attitude, certainly, but Reeve considered the consent given by the great powers to particular principles of international law as essential to the system having purchase in international relations.<sup>934</sup> Reeve recognised the malleability of international law, but where conservatives connected this malleability to states' self-interested re-interpretations of the law, Reeve saw the possibility for progress and a more civilised

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<sup>929</sup> Reeve (1862: 291-2).

<sup>930</sup> Reeve (1871b: 285) and (1854c: 206). See also Reeve (1862: 263); (1866: 277-8).

<sup>931</sup> Reeve (1876a: 355-6). See also (1871b: 284-5).

<sup>932</sup> Reeve (1854c: 205), see also (1862: 260-1).

<sup>933</sup> Reeve (1866: 275), reviewing Harrison (1866). See also Claeys (2010: 63) on the Positivists' focus on duties rather than interests or rights.

international relations.<sup>935</sup>

Reeve thought that only with a general respect for public law would a real peace be possible, a peacefulness in international affairs. '[T]hat which makes peace effective and secure', Reeve argued, '[was] mutual confidence, common obligations, respect for treaties, [and] an open policy'.<sup>936</sup> What instead existed in Europe was a mere stability and order resulting from a balance of military power; 'an armed peace – a peace maintained by armaments as vast, by an expenditure as profuse, as has been caused in other times by the efforts of war. We look in vain for that confidence in the written law of Europe'.<sup>937</sup> Where for conservatives such an equilibrium through a balance of power was the fundamental principle of order and stability in Europe, merely buttressed further by a robust treaty system, for Reeve it was a melancholy reality, providing peace for the moment but with war always on the horizon – far from the realisation of a peaceful, civilised international relations.

Reeve's normative vision for the international sphere was consequently focused on the rule of international law, rather than on a durable balance of power or the instantiation of universal moral principles – though each of these notions had their own role to play, through an enlightened attitude among states and through the absence of an aggressive hegemonic state, in making the progress of civilisation and the rule of international law possible.

Until roughly 1863 Reeve thought that progress had indeed taken hold in international relations. For each of his three major markers of progress — the freedom of commerce, the limitation of war, and the spread of constitutional liberty — Reeve located its main advance in the period to 1863: the Franco-British commercial treaty of 1860;<sup>938</sup> the change in the naval capture law during the Crimean War;<sup>939</sup> and the spread of constitutional liberty in Italy in 1859-60.<sup>940</sup> During these years, Reeve envisioned Britain as in a position of moral leadership in Europe. The interests of Britain, he argued, were closely interwoven with the cause of progress and civilisation.<sup>941</sup> Britain stood for 'a liberal and progressive policy', which promoted 'institutions framed in a more liberal spirit, more unrestricted commercial intercourse, ... and a more intimate

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<sup>934</sup> See e.g. Reeve (1866: 286-7).

<sup>935</sup> Reeve (1862: 261-4).

<sup>936</sup> Reeve (1871c: 476). See also (1866: 277-8).

<sup>937</sup> Reeve (1863: 288).

<sup>938</sup> Reeve (1860a, esp. 280 and 311); (1860b: 551); (1860c: 270-71); (1860d: 275-6). See also Reeve (1878b, esp. 580-83).

<sup>939</sup> Reeve (1854c); see also (1862); (1876a).

<sup>940</sup> See especially Reeve (1859b); (1859c); (1860b).

connection between the common interests of neighbouring countries', thereby fostering progress and the spread of civilisation.<sup>942</sup>

Reeve advocated for Britain a general policy of non-interference, in which it was 'to aim at an indirect, rather than a direct, influence on other nations', through a combination of her 'example' and of her moral support – 'friendship and ... confidence' – for the side of peace, civilisation, and progress.<sup>943</sup> A particular instance of this means of influence was Britain's handling of France, which, Reeve thought, had not acted to throw Europe into chaos in the early 1860s mostly due to the constraining influence of Britain, whose support Napoleon III wanted to retain.<sup>944</sup> Reeve, in contrast to conservative commentators, thought moral support a viable tool of foreign policy.

These achievements in the cause of progress and civilisation were, Reeve argued, the foundation of Britain's honour. He concluded after the Trent affair that the government's vigorous action had sustained the honour of Britain – because it had effectively asserted the rights of neutrals and compelled respect for international law.<sup>945</sup> By the late 1870s, Reeve still thought of Britain's honour as following from its ability to effect progress in the world, however recalcitrant this world had become to British good intentions.<sup>946</sup> Much as for other liberals, for Reeve honour lay in Britain ensuring the progress of civilisation, not, as for conservatives, in its ability to assert its interests.

There were consequently significant differences between Whig and conservative thought on international relations. Reeve favoured Parliament rather than the executive, was committed to the notion of progress, hoped to realise progress through an international order based on law rather than force, thought that a policy of moral support was effective in securing progress, and that effecting progress was the basis of Britain's honour. At the same time, there were two consequential areas where the thought of Reeve and conservative commentators overlapped.

#### Conservative element I: Progress and the principle of nationality

Reeve thought that the spread of constitutional liberty on the British model was an important part of the general progress of civilisation. This concern featured most significantly in his writings on the unification of Italy and the state of Europe until

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<sup>941</sup> See e.g. Reeve (1854c: 225); (1862: 280); (1876a: 358-367).

<sup>942</sup> Reeve (1866: 296, 298). See also Reeve (1862: 263); (1866: 294-5).

<sup>943</sup> Reeve (1863: 290-1).

<sup>944</sup> Reeve (1863: 290); (1866: 295). See also Parry (2006: 8).

<sup>945</sup> Reeve (1862: 280, 284).

<sup>946</sup> Reeve (1878b: 562-3, 584, 589, 592-3).

1863, and, in the late 1870s, on the future of the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire. His concern did not extend, however, to the principle of nationality, which in these contexts he ignored or outright repudiated. Reeve argued for a 'cordial sympathy with the cause of freedom and national rights abroad', but this mindset was to be held 'without abetting war and revolution'.<sup>947</sup> In his single extended discussion of the principle, Reeve first argued that the principle of nationality was an ideal notion, with no country, '[not] even France', actually ordered along its lines.<sup>948</sup> Asserting the normative validity of the principle of nationality consequently meant denying the legitimacy of existing states, and 'the application of this principle would lead to the entire dissolution of the multifarious states which are properly called empires'.<sup>949</sup> Some people saw the end of empire as a positive result, but Reeve rejected this perspective, calling on the authority of historical precedent: the notion that empires were 'monstrous anomalies ... is contradicted by the entire history of mankind'.<sup>950</sup> A Europe consisting of empires was, Reeve thought, perfectly compatible with a Europe which saw its civilisation ever progressing.

Reeve's rejection of the principle of nationality did not mean, however, that he thought any sentiment of nationality among a population could be ignored as a misguided flight of fancy. The sentiment of nationality was, if not an expression of 'moral right and universal conscience', a clear indication of unenlightened administration.<sup>951</sup> The sentiment was a call, Reeve argued, not for granting a people independence, but for the dominant state to reform its government along liberal and constitutional lines. Reeve thus rejected any revolutionary implications which the principle of nationality might have, and turned the existence of such a sentiment into an argument for the realisation of his valued principles of constitutional liberty.

This perspective on nationality informed Reeve's positive view of the developments in Italy from 1859 onward. Unlike conservative commentators, he did not present the course of events as one of Piedmontese aggrandisement; with other liberals, he rather framed it as Piedmontese leadership in 'the cause of national independence'.<sup>952</sup> Like many moderate liberals, however, Reeve supported independence and unification only in one particular form; unification through 'self-improvement

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<sup>947</sup> Reeve (1866: 298).

<sup>948</sup> Reeve (1859b: 563-64). Reeve otherwise rarely involved the notion in his analyses of events.

<sup>949</sup> Reeve (1859b: 564).

<sup>950</sup> Reeve (1859b: 564). See also (1876b: 542). The British Empire in particular was 'infinitely more powerful, more civilised, and more free than any separate fragment could be' (Reeve 1859b: 565).

<sup>951</sup> Reeve (1859b: 565). See for a similar assessment Acton (1862: 3).

under the aegis of constitutional monarchy'.<sup>953</sup> Reeve contrasted this outcome, as supported by Britain's 'liberal policy', to that of independence and unification as achieved through the upheavals of Mazzini's 'revolutionary party', or through the 'foreign intervention and ... military aggressions' favoured by France.<sup>954</sup> Only through the internal expansion of a constitutional monarchy in Italy, Reeve argued, would national unification be achieved with the stability and 'prolonged peace' necessary for the progress of civilisation in the peninsula.<sup>955</sup> Reeve was consequently satisfied with the course which events took, the unification and 'pacification of the Peninsula ... under the aegis of the constitutional monarchy of Victor Emmanuel'.<sup>956</sup>

Reeve's commitment to the spread of civilisation and concomitant rejection of the principle of nationality also played an important role in his understanding of the Eastern Question. Reeve assumed that Russian rule would not advance civilisation in the area, so he stipulated that any independence from the Ottoman Empire for the peoples of south-eastern Europe ought to be a real independence, from Russian domination as well.<sup>957</sup> He recognised the salience of military might in this calculus, and consequently rejected a reorganisation of the area along the lines of the principle of nationality – all the peoples would need to be unified in one state for them to be strong enough to reject Russian dominance.<sup>958</sup> At the same time, Reeve was not willing, as conservatives were, to argue that these people ought to remain part of the Ottoman Empire, in the cause of balancing Russia in particular and order and stability in the area in general.<sup>959</sup> He was convinced that the spread of civilisation was impossible for a Christian population under Muslim rule. He equated 'Christianity and Islamism' with 'civilisation and barbarism' and he thought that 'abuses ... [and] incurable decay ... [were] implanted in the very essence of Mussulman domination'.<sup>960</sup> Reeve consequently favoured the creation of a single 'Christian state, capable of self-government and self-defence'.<sup>961</sup> And from a combination of classical affinity and similar national attributes, Reeve proposed the Greeks as the Englishmen of the area, taking the lead in the progress of civilisation and the creation of this Christian polity, unifying the various

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<sup>952</sup> Reeve (1859b: 558). See also Reeve (1856: 499); (1859a); (1859b: 560); (1860b: 533).

<sup>953</sup> Reeve (1859b: 561); see also (1860b: 533-4). See further Harvie (1976).

<sup>954</sup> Reeve (1859b: 561, 575). See also (1859b: 563); (1859c: 15, 17); (1860b: 534).

<sup>955</sup> Reeve (1859b: 560).

<sup>956</sup> Reeve (1860b: 534).

<sup>957</sup> Reeve (1854a: 284-5, 310); (1854b: 460); (1855b: 579); (1877a: 273-4, 295); (1877d: 258-9, 261-2); (1878a: 572-3; (1878b: 578).

<sup>958</sup> Reeve (1854a: 305-6); (1876b: 558-9); (1877a: 295); (1878a: 581, 584).

<sup>959</sup> Reeve (1854a: 283-5); (1877a: 265); (1877d: 261); (1878b: 565).

<sup>960</sup> Reeve (1854a: 298 and 286). See also (1877a: 266-7).

extant nationalities under one state.<sup>962</sup> Reeve's normative concern was over constitutional liberty, not nationality, and when he discussed the principle, it was to note how it conflicted with the orderly progress of liberty and civilisation.

#### Conservative element II: international law and the Treaty of Vienna

Reeve noted that much of actual international law, those 'legal principles ... regulating ... the differences of empires', was formed or confirmed during the Napoleonic Wars, and had changed little afterwards.<sup>963</sup> Since that time, some of those established rules and agreements had become 'inconsistent with the milder manners, the more extended intercourse, and the more liberal policy of modern times'.<sup>964</sup> And since international law existed to service the cause of progress and civilisation – 'the true test of the existing Law of Nations', Reeve argued, 'is in ... its congruity to the interest of civilised States rightly understood' – that meant that these laws would have to change, made 'more humane and temperate'.<sup>965</sup> In articles in the 1850s, '60s, and '70s Reeve argued for more limited rights of naval capture, constraining belligerents in favour of the rights of neutrals and the freedom of commerce.<sup>966</sup> In this more 'progressive age', he argued, the 'most liberal' policy would relinquish the belligerents' right to seize enemy trade goods on neutral ships.<sup>967</sup> Reeve's penchant for progress was however carefully delineated: he valued the set of treaties making up the Vienna settlement, as the linchpin of respect for public law, and was hesitant to countenance the possibility of its wholesale supersession.

Reeve argued against those who criticised the supposedly reactionary nature of the Vienna settlement, as merely a tool of the powerful, making empire and repression possible. He characterised the settlement instead as a check on the abuse of power by the strong. 'Great Powers', Reeve observed, 'might be able to hold their own by their military strength; but small States owe their very existence to the treaties they affect to denounce. In reality treaties serve to restrain the former and to preserve the latter'.<sup>968</sup> The Treaty of Vienna was a buttress of small states' independence.

More importantly, though, Reeve thought that the Treaty of Vienna held such a

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<sup>961</sup> Reeve (1854a: 299). See also (1878a: 568, 581, 584); (1879: 288).

<sup>962</sup> Reeve (1854a: 300-2); (1877d: 261); (1878a: 584-6); (1879: 288-9). Acton (1862: 17) also argued that uniting several nationalities in one state would aid the progress of civilisation.

<sup>963</sup> Reeve (1854c: 197), see also (1862: 260-1).

<sup>964</sup> Reeve (1862: 261-2).

<sup>965</sup> Reeve (1862: 263-4) and Reeve (1854c: 197). See also Reeve (1854c: 197; (1859b: 572-3); (1862: 260-1).

<sup>966</sup> Reeve (1854c); (1862); (1876a). Reeve here argued explicitly against the position taken by Mill, see for the latter Varouxakis (2013a: 171-9).

<sup>967</sup> Reeve (1854c: 197).

<sup>968</sup> Reeve (1859b: 566).



central place in the public law of Europe, that derision and rejection of the Vienna settlement could be equated to the absence of respect for international law in general. He feared that particular abrogations of the Vienna settlement would lead to a dissolution of the Treaty of Vienna as a whole, and that with this august treaty would disappear respect for international law and for the rights of states.<sup>969</sup> The cooperative attitude of states would turn into an adversarial one, and the promise of the progress of civilisation in international relations would not be realised. While both conservative commentators and Reeve valued the Vienna settlement, their approval had a different basis. Conservatives valued the Vienna system primarily for the stability and order which the rigid settlement of potential conflicts supplied. They still perceived an adversarial attitude amongst states; this was exactly why the settlement was needed.

Reeve was preoccupied with the fate of the Treaty of Vienna over the course of its slow demise during the 1850s and 1860s. As Italy became unified, Reeve was satisfied with Italy's internal developments, but less sanguine about the state of Europe in general. Early on he noted that Austria had clear and recognised rights based on established treaties. Progress for Italy would mean states acting against these rights, and so acting against the treaty system. Reeve was not comfortable with this, and he initially privileged his commitment to international law over the opportunity to further liberal values. The wider ill effects of 'a deliberate breach of the public law of Europe', Reeve argued, 'bind us imperatively to the maintenance of treaties even when they are at variance with the liberal sentiments and free institutions of this country'.<sup>970</sup> These strong feelings, though, did not stop him from rejoicing in the eventual unification of Italy. By 1866, Reeve wholly approved of the developments in Italy. The progressive nature of events, he implied, had robbed them of their sting, and respect for public law had persisted.<sup>971</sup>

Reeve's second worry concerned the intent of Napoleon III, and the latter's seeming desire 'to wrest the fundamental Treaties of Europe from their true intention' and to overturn the Vienna settlement.<sup>972</sup> His fear in 1860 was that Napoleon III would choose to continue on a path of 'restless designs of political change and territorial aggrandisement, backed by military force'.<sup>973</sup> Over the following years, however, Reeve was pleasantly surprised 'with the habitual moderation of the course he [Napoleon III]

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<sup>969</sup> See especially Reeve (1859b: 559, 565-6, 567-8, 573, 576).

<sup>970</sup> Reeve (1859b: 559, 565-8).

<sup>971</sup> Reeve (1866: 295).

<sup>972</sup> Reeve (1860b: 535); see also (1860b: 549-51); (1860c: 270); (1860e: 42-3).

<sup>973</sup> Reeve (1860b: 551).

has pursued'.<sup>974</sup> Although Reeve generally disapproved of Napoleon III,<sup>975</sup> he was less censorious than most conservatives. Reeve, like many liberals, thought that the Emperor's destructive impulses were effectively checked by his alliance with Britain.<sup>976</sup> Britain would only support French initiatives which were to the benefit of mankind, and, Reeve concluded, French policy had consequently not proven a threat to Europe and its system of public law.<sup>977</sup> All signs pointed to 'the progress of freedom and good government' throughout Europe.<sup>978</sup>

Reeve's rosy vision was dispelled in the following years, however, as Prussia took a leading role in European politics. It required Prussia's aggressive and self-aggrandising policy, barbaric rather than in service of progress and civilisation, for the abrogation of particular aspects of the Vienna settlement to blossom into a wholesale decline in respect for international law and the rights of states.

#### 1863-80: International law and the re-barbarisation of international relations

Reeve's liberal vision of progress and conservative rejection of the principle of nationality and commitment to the Treaty of Vienna came together to form his particularly pessimistic view of international politics between 1863 and 1880. The utter disregard shown to the Treaty of Vienna over the 1860s was even more consequential for Reeve than it was for conservatives. For Reeve, this indicated the impotence of his vision of progress through an international society ordered by law rather than by force. Conservatives regained their sanguineness over the 1870s as Bismarck seemed to adopt a more moderate attitude and as basic balance of power principles seemed able to provide stability and order. For Reeve, this primary role for force merely emphasised the promise of the law-based order which was lost, and he remained despondent about the tenor of international affairs until the end of the period treated in this study.

By 1866 Reeve observed a 'great and dreadful change in the condition and prospects of Continental Europe'.<sup>979</sup> Prussia had instigated and won aggressive wars with first Denmark and then Austria, in 'breach of every engagement [of international law]', and would merely confirm this aggressive attitude in 1870-71 by its war with

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<sup>974</sup> Reeve (1863: 290).

<sup>975</sup> The one major exception being the commercial treaty between France and Britain, which Napoleon III made possible. See e.g. Reeve (1860d: 276), where he remarked: 'I can hardly credit the fact that I catch myself singing the praises of the Emperor and Cobden.'

<sup>976</sup> Reeve (1859b: 576, 595-6); (1862: 281); (1863: 289-290).

<sup>977</sup> Reeve (1866: 295).

<sup>978</sup> Reeve (1863: 288).

<sup>979</sup> Reeve (1866: 276-7). See also e.g. (1867: 269-70); (1871c: 473-4).

France and designs on Luxembourg.<sup>980</sup> Through its utter disregard for treaty obligations Prussia had effected a change in the character of international relations. With one great power ignoring public law, other states could no longer count on it being observed, and would themselves lose their respect for it. Reeve felt forced to conclude '[t]hat respect for the general public law of Europe, which had been maintained for half a century, in spite of numerous revolutions and of some partial changes which are inevitable in all human affairs, is lost. ... the authority of treaties and the restraint of common obligations are at an end'.<sup>981</sup> Bismarck's conduct had re-established the 'spirit of mutual mistrust' in Europe's international relations.<sup>982</sup>

Reeve related the loss of respect for public law to the end of the Vienna settlement, those 'great treaties, on which the law of nations and the peace of Europe rested'.<sup>983</sup> If states could not trust one another to adhere to even the Treaty of Vienna, then, Reeve thought, they could no longer trust public law in general. Reeve even equated the Treaty of Vienna to the Treaty of Westphalia, arguing that 'the same spirit pervaded both', and that with its actions Prussia 'has in reality overthrown and reversed the principles of the Treaty of Westphalia itself, so far as they might still be traced in the public law of Europe' – so large loomed the Vienna settlement in Reeve's perception of the public law of Europe.<sup>984</sup> Whereas conservatives thought that the unification of Italy and attendant French policy had caused the demise of the Treaty of Vienna, Reeve stated that 'the final overthrow of the great settlement of 1815 ... [was] the result of the policy of Prussia in 1864 and 1866'.<sup>985</sup>

Reeve's pessimistic outlook persisted throughout the 1870s. Where Prussia had caused the initial loss of faith in public law among states, Russia further strengthened this dynamic during the 1870s, unilaterally abrogating part of the Treaty of Paris in 1870<sup>986</sup> and acting with similar disregard for established treaties during the crisis of the Eastern Question from 1876-78.<sup>987</sup> Together Russia and Prussia had 'annihilated the faith in treaties concluded between all the great Powers of Europe'.<sup>988</sup> The period from 1863 to 1878 was one during which aggressive states such as Prussia and Russia ignored

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<sup>980</sup> Reeve (1866: 280-1)

<sup>981</sup> Reeve (1866: 276).

<sup>982</sup> Reeve (1866: 294). See also Reeve (1866: 282-3, 288-90, 294); (1867: 270, 297); (1870: 180); (1871c: 470-1, 475);

<sup>983</sup> Reeve (1867: 270).

<sup>984</sup> Reeve (1871c: 477-8).

<sup>985</sup> Reeve (1871a: 9). See also (1866: 277, 282, 286, 294); (1867: 270).

<sup>986</sup> Reeve (1871b: 267, 278, 284).

<sup>987</sup> Reeve (1871b: 276); (1876b: 564-70); (1877a: 266, 270-1, 273, 277); (1877b: 360-1); (1877c: 534-5, 563); (1877d: 256-9, 270); (1878a: 562-566, 574, 576, 583, 586-7).

their treaty obligations in order to aggrandise themselves through military conquest. Prussia had asserted, and Russia had confirmed, that states ought to approach international relations as an antagonistic affair, governed by force and might.

Reeve thought that the absence of trust in international law was accompanied by a wider decline in the civilisation of the international sphere. The enlightened attitude among states was lost, and statesmen now had 'ambitions to gratify and selfish objects to gain'.<sup>989</sup> Even more damningly, the promise of a rule of law in international affairs had been betrayed. The decline of respect for public law, Reeve stated, 'throws us back from a state of peace based on law, to a state of war regulated by force'.<sup>990</sup> In 1866, Reeve worried that the acts of Prussia and Russia seemed to set the stage for 'a lawless scramble'.<sup>991</sup> By 1878, he had argued repeatedly that 'in this, the last quarter of the nineteenth century, we have fallen back into a state of anarchy, in which the independence, the freedom, and the territorial rights of nations are defended by force alone'.<sup>992</sup> He recalled the optimistic conclusion which Gladstone had given to his 1870 article on the state of the international sphere and, while sympathetic of the aspiration, he noted that its vision was wholly at odds with reality: 'We see independence crushed, aggression triumphant ... the general judgement of mankind defied and derided, and the idea of Public Right contemptuously overthrown'.<sup>993</sup> The last time a similar anarchy had reigned, Reeve recalled, was when Napoleon had been in power, when public law was re-established only after a general war involving a coalition of all the great powers of Europe.<sup>994</sup> Europe now seemed to be entering a similar period of conflict, governed by 'war and the causes of war, only to be terminated when the exhausted world reverts to the salutary control of public law'.<sup>995</sup>

Reeve envisioned international law as an alternative foundation for international relations, which would obviate the rule of force. As respect for international law deteriorated, however, Reeve also asserted the need for a forceful response in order to uphold the system of public law. Conservative thought also showed this tension, but there it was somewhat resolved since particular treaties made the use of force less likely,

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<sup>988</sup> Reeve (1878a: 561-2, see also 564-6).

<sup>989</sup> Reeve (1871b: 283).

<sup>990</sup> Reeve (1871b: 284-5). See also (1860b: 551).

<sup>991</sup> Reeve (1866: 277); see also (1867: 269-70); (1871a: 31); (1871b: 277, 285); (1871c: 460, 473-7).

<sup>992</sup> Reeve (1878a: 565). See also (1877a: 266); (1878a: 562).

<sup>993</sup> Reeve (1878a: 563-4); see also (1877a: 266). See further Gladstone (1870: 592-3).

<sup>994</sup> Reeve (1878a: 565). Note also that Reeve here characterised the Napoleonic war as a coalition attempting to re-establish the rule of public law, not, as conservatives presented it, as a balance of power coalition against a potential hegemon.

<sup>995</sup> Reeve (1878a: 563).

while respect for the treaty system depended on the existence of a general balance of power. Reeve considered force and law to be less closely entangled. He thought that states could follow public law and respect their treaty obligations even in the absence of force – countries which took an enlightened attitude would act in that way. 'Treaties could consequently be 'obeyed and respected' either 'from considerations of duty and honour ... [or] from the armed strength of those who support them'.<sup>996</sup>

As long as international relations was a fairly civilised realm, Reeve thought, Britain's moral influence sufficed to sustain respect for public law. It was only as the tenor of international relations declined that the threat or use of force became necessary.<sup>997</sup> Tragically, Reeve reflected in retrospect, Britain had missed its opportunity to forcefully stop Prussia in its tracks during the Danish Duchies affair. By the time it did contemplate action, with Russia's abrogation of Black Sea neutrality, British action in support of the treaty system had become a 'Quixotic task': allies were wanting and any action would most likely merely spark a general war.<sup>998</sup>

By 1878, Reeve had become fully convinced of the antagonistic attitude pervading international relations and the concomitant rule of force alone. Reeve argued that 'the maintenance and defence of public law and justice' now required 'a vigorous use of armed force on the side of law and justice ... [treaties] can only be maintained by those who are prepared to uphold and defend them'.<sup>999</sup> As had been the case when Napoleon swept away the public law of Europe, now force would have to be used in order to re-establish respect for public law, and make this same threat of force finally obsolete.

So whereas for conservatives the potential use of force was closely interwoven with the proper functioning of treaties, for Reeve such a role for military force implied that international relations was already no longer functioning properly, that respect for public law had waned. States ought to adhere to international law out of their enlightened interest in the peace and progress of Europe. Only those states bent on aggrandisement, which already had decided to step outside of the framework of public law, had to be forced back into its confines. For Reeve a sense of civilisation, not the threat of force, was the primary foundation of the treaty system. Only when, by the late 1870s, this enlightened attitude had broken down did he discern the necessity for a

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<sup>996</sup> Reeve (1871b: 284-5). See also (1876a: 369); (1877a: 266).

<sup>997</sup> Reeve (1863: 288).

<sup>998</sup> Reeve (1866: 279). See also (1866: 295-6); (1871b: 283); (1877a: 275); (1878a: 563-5).

<sup>999</sup> Reeve (1878a: 563). See also (1878c: 254).

forceful restoration of respect for public law.

### Conclusion

Reeve shared some affinities with the liberal internationalist thought identified by Casper Sylvest. Both ‘aimed to reform the conditions of international politics’ in order to realise progress, justice, and a non-anarchical order, and saw international law as a potential locus of progress.<sup>1000</sup> Much like Reeve, liberal internationalist lawyers understood international law as positivist in the late 19th century and felt the need to ‘identify and codify (or rewrite) these rules as civilisation developed’.<sup>1001</sup> In contrast with Reeve, though, these internationalist lawyers were in fact optimistic during the 1870s, perceiving ‘a new era of international law’, rather than its disintegration.<sup>1002</sup> Furthermore, in Britain in particular, Reeve was out of tune with the dominant, Gladstonian strand of liberal internationalism.<sup>1003</sup> Reeve affirmed the Treaty of Vienna, rejected a role for the principle of nationality in the progress of Europe, and privileged institutional development over moral uplift. The proper morals were important to him, but exactly because they made the improvement of international laws and establishment of the rule of international law possible. His sense of international progress thus had more of an institutional slant than that of most British liberals and radicals of the time — it was more closely wedded to the established forms of great power cooperation and consensus in positive law.<sup>1004</sup>

As a Whig participant in British debates on foreign policy, Reeve's international political thought was characteristically different on several major counts from the Victorian conservative perspective on international relations. Reeve's Whig antecedents closely influenced his thoughts on the proper genesis of foreign policy, mandating a prominent role for Parliament and a clear constraint on the independence of statesmen, as favoured by conservative commentators. Reeve's thought contained strands of positional conservatism in his preference of established empires over the newly imagined nation-states and in his conviction that the Treaty of Vienna had to be sustained as central to the system of public law. In a Whiggish move, Reeve rejected any revolutionary implications which the principle of nationality might have, and instead

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<sup>1000</sup> Sylvest (2009: 10, 69).

<sup>1001</sup> Sylvest (2009: 68).

<sup>1002</sup> Sylvest (2009: 74), see also Koskeniemi (2001: 13).

<sup>1003</sup> Sylvest (2009: 42-43, 49).

<sup>1004</sup> Contrast Reeve's position also with that of the international lawyers studied by Koskeniemi (2001: 15-16, 19, 63, 92-93).

turned the existence of such a sentiment into an argument for the realisation of his valued principles of constitutional liberty.

The fundamental tenor of his vision of international relations was markedly not conservative, in a normative commitment to progress and the spread of civilisation and in envisioning the promise of an international legal order which would obviate the primacy of force in international politics. This vision of steady progress within an enveloping institutional structure was decidedly suitable to a Whig world-view, even if during these decades the international sphere proved less amenable than Britain itself to a Whig mental ordering of events.

### **The *Saturday Review* and conservative international political thought**

The *Saturday Review* was founded in 1855 as an explicitly non-partisan weekly periodical. Instead it had a clear class affiliation; it was written by young, academically distinguished university graduates and conceived of the metropolitan educated classes as its audience.<sup>1005</sup> Bevington, the paper's foremost chronicler, argues that the *Saturday* is 'significant in that it is in a very real sense representative ... [of the] opinions of the best informed conversational circles of the time'.<sup>1006</sup> It was also popular: by 1868 'the circulation of the *Saturday* was in excess of 10,000 and considerably greater than that of any [other high-brow] weekly paper'.<sup>1007</sup> This general appeal was carefully fostered by editor J.D. Cook, who 'employed the Liberals to write on the matters where they were most Conservative, and the Conservatives on topics which they could treat liberally'.<sup>1008</sup>

The paper did, however, adopt a political inflection over time. As Collini has observed, 'those members of the educated classes who came to maturity in the 1850s and 1860s' often came to reject Gladstonian Liberalism during either the early 1870s or 1880s and adhered to 'an increasingly conservative Liberalism'.<sup>1009</sup> Indeed, by 1883 the *Saturday* showed settled support for the Conservative party. The world-view from which the *Saturday* and its main contributors eventually arrived at their conservatism in the 1880s was however distinctive from that of contemporary conservative intellectuals. This difference between mainstream self-identified conservative commentators and the *Saturday*'s commentary was present in their international political thought, perhaps even more so than in their positions on domestic affairs.

There were three major divergences in the perspectives of conservatives and the *Saturday*. Firstly, whereas conservatives often worried about Britain's honour, the *Saturday* accorded little salience to the honour of Britain in its policy advocacy. Secondly, the *Saturday*'s analyses of international affairs showed a disregard for international law even more complete than that of conservatives, rejecting not only the possibility of international law as an alternative ordering principle of international affairs, but also the relevance of treaties in general and the Vienna settlement in

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<sup>1005</sup> Bevington (1941: 25-7, 52, 54-5); Collini (1991: 39, 53); Koss (1981: 185). For an overview of frequent contributors, such as J.F. Stephen and H.S. Maine, see Bevington (1941, esp. 25-36).

<sup>1006</sup> Bevington (1941: 53, see also 319).

<sup>1007</sup> Bevington (1941: 24).

<sup>1008</sup> Charles Pearson, cited in Bevington (1941: 35) and Koss (1981: 185). The authorship of most of the articles published in the *Saturday* has not been identified and, consequently, this chapter discusses the editorial line taken by the *Saturday*, not the particular positions taken by its contributors, since those cannot be fully recovered. The focus of the analysis is on those areas in which the *Saturday* presented both a consistent interpretation and a distinctive voice.

<sup>1009</sup> Collini (1991: 280-2).



particular. Furthermore, and wholly in contrast to conservative commentators, the *Saturday* did express respect for the sentiment and the principle of nationality, as having both normative value and practical worth. The chapter finishes with a case study of the *Saturday*'s commitment to the unification of Germany, the most distinctive of the positions which the *Saturday* took in the British debates on international affairs during these decades.

### British Honour in the Balance

The *Saturday* shared with conservative commentators a similar understanding of the basic dynamic of international relations. The same conceptual scheme, revolving around great power politics, the primacy of force and interests, and the concerns of stability and peace, informed the *Saturday*'s perspective on international affairs, especially in the debates on the Crimean War,<sup>1010</sup> the Franco-Prussian war and abrogation of Black Sea neutrality,<sup>1011</sup> and the Eastern Question.<sup>1012</sup> The one main difference between the *Saturday* and conservative commentators, within the paradigm of great power politics, force, and interests, was that the *Saturday* consistently showed less of a sense that British honour was at stake.

The *Saturday* emphasised just as much as conservatives that a state needed to have stature in order to have influence in international politics; it needed to have a reputation for being willing and able to use force to secure its interests, especially in those cases where it had already verbally expressed its displeasure with events.<sup>1013</sup> The *Saturday*, again just as conservative commentators, invoked the importance of Britain's stature in its arguments against the moralising of Gladstone and of radicals such as Cobden, Bright, Mill, and Froude. These people, in the eyes of the *Saturday*, either

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<sup>1010</sup> *Saturday* (1855, Dec 29: 145-6); Venables (1855, Nov 3: 1); (1855, Nov 10: 28-9); (1855, Dec 1: 73); (1855, Dec 8: 89); (1855, Dec 15: 105); (1855, Dec 22: 130); (1856, Jan 19: 201); (1856, Feb 9: 268); (1856, Mar 1: 334); (1856, Mar 8: 358); (1856, Apr 5: 445-6).

<sup>1011</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Jul 16: 63); (1870, Jul 30: 126-7); (1870, Aug 20: 221); (1870, Sep 3: 289-90); (1870, Oct 1: 413); (1870, Oct 8: 446-7); (1870, Oct 22: 509); (1870, Oct 29: 543); (1870, Nov 19: 641); (1870, Nov 26: 670-2); (1870, Dec 17: 767); (1870, Dec 31: 821); (1871, Mar 11: 293-4); (1871, Mar 25: 357); (1871, May 6: 553); (1871, Sep 2: 295-6); (1871, Dec 9: 739); (1871, Dec 16: 771).

<sup>1012</sup> *Saturday* (1876, Apr 8: 449); (1876, May 27: 665-6); (1876, Jun 17: 761-2); (1876, Oct 21: 491); (1877, Apr 21: 465); (1877, Jul 14: 31-2); (1877, Dec 22: 755); (1878, Jan 26: 98); (1878, Feb 23: 223-4); (1878, Mar 2: 255); (1878, Mar 16: 321-2); (1878, Mar 23: 351); (1878, May 18: 608); (1878, Jun 15: 739-40); (1878, Jul 6: 1); (1878, Jul 13: 35); (1879, Jan 18: 65-66); (1879, Mar 1: 257-8).

<sup>1013</sup> Broderick (1860, Jun 23: 803); *Saturday* (1859, Jun 11: 704); (1859, Jul 16: 62-3); (1859, Aug 20: 209); (1861, Jan 12: 32); (1861, Feb 2: 109-10); (1863, Jul 11: 41); (1863, Aug 15: 217); (1864, May 14: 577-8); (1864, Jun 11: 703); (1864, Jul 2: 2-3); (1865, Feb 11: 156); (1870, Jul 23: 96); (1870, Aug 20: 221-2); (1870, Dec 10: 732); (1870, Dec 17: 767); (1871, Jan 21: 82); (1878, Jan 26: 98); (1878, Apr 6: 413); (1878, May 18: 607); (1878, Jun 29: 807); Venables (1855, Nov 3: 2); (1855, Dec 8: 89); (1856, Jan 5: 165); (1856, Jan 19: 201).

expressed their disapproval of foreign governments, without having an attendant willingness to act on this displeasure, or they excused the offensive behaviour of foreign governments, while British interests were in fact substantively affected. Either way, such behaviour made for confused rather than firm and assertive signalling to other states. Those states would consequently attend to British opinion less and less, and Britain would see its influence in international affairs diminish.<sup>1014</sup>

While the *Saturday* thus also asserted the importance of Britain's stature, it seldom perceived the honour of Britain to be in the balance to the extent that war was worthwhile. In particular, while it insisted that Britain only assert verbally what it was willing to enforce militarily, it was unwilling to actually advocate the use of force merely to make sure Britain kept its word when no other considerations favoured going to war. Compared to the *Saturday*, conservative commentators both had more of a sense that Britain's prestige was precarious, and they seemed to consider honour more of an end in itself.

During the Danish Duchies affair, conservative commentators argued that Britain had all but promised over the course of its diplomacy that it would safeguard Denmark. They feared a fatal stab to Britain's stature now that the government was unwilling to act against Prussian and Austrian aggression. The *Saturday*, in contrast, argued against going to war as calls began spreading for forceful action by the government. The *Saturday* did not think that the statements of the government had placed Britain's honour in the balance and it consequently thought that any British involvement would be based wholly on support 'for the ambiguous rights of Denmark', which it did not consider worth a war.<sup>1015</sup>

During the American Civil War, conservative commentators perceived gross slights to British honour in the North's demeanour during the Trent affair and in Northern demands for Britain to impound Southern ships in British docks. The *Saturday* disliked the North quite as much as conservative commentators did, but lacked their enthusiasm for the South.<sup>1016</sup> Whereas conservatives consequently saw a war with the

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<sup>1014</sup> *Saturday* (1855, Dec 1: 74); (1856, Jan 12: 181-2); (1855, Nov 24: 59-60); (1860, Mar 17: 335); (1860, Apr 21: 485); (1861, Apr 13: 354); (1861, Dec 7: 571); (1862, Jan 4: 1); (1863, Mar 7: 303); (1863, Mar 28: 389); (1864, Mar 5: 275); (1870, Oct 8: 446-7); (1870, Nov 26: 676-7); (1870, Dec 10: 735-6); (1871, Jan 21: 82); (1876, Oct 14: 461-2); (1876, Oct 21: 492); (1876, Nov 4: 554); (1876, Nov 25: 649-50); (1877, Feb 17: 184-5); (1877, Feb 24: 215-6); (1877, Nov 17: 599-600); (1878, Feb 16: 193-4); (1878, Apr 6: 414); (1878, Jun 8: 707); (1878, Jul 13: 35); (1878, Dec 21: 768); Venable (1855, Dec 22: 129).

<sup>1015</sup> *Saturday* (1864, Jan 30: 123-4). See also (1863, May 23: 645); (1863, Nov 21: 661); (1863, Dec 19: 772); (1864, Jan 2: 6); (1864, Feb 6: 151); (1864, Feb 13: 180-1); (1864, Feb 20: 210-1); (1864, Mar 5: 276); (1864, May 14: 577-8); (1864, Jun 11: 703); (1864, Jul 2: 2-3); (1864, Jul 9: 37).

<sup>1016</sup> *Saturday* (1860, Nov 17: 610-11); (1860, Dec 15: 754); (1860, Dec 29: 824-5); (1861, Jun 8: 573); (1861,

North not only as a means to safeguard British honour, but also as a means to secure the desired end of Southern independence, for the *Saturday* there was no upside to war with the North; it would be 'an unmixed evil'.<sup>1017</sup> The *Saturday* was consequently happy with the measured response of Britain to the Trent affair, merely demanding redress rather than, say, breaking the North's blockade of the South in a fit of pique.<sup>1018</sup> Similarly, it was pleased at the seizure of the *Alexandra* in British docks, thought it unfortunate that the *Alabama* had escaped, and hoped Britain could avoid being forced into a profitless war with the North.<sup>1019</sup> Compared with conservative commentators, the *Saturday* was more concerned to keep the peace and less concerned to compel the respectful treatment of Britain; it rather characterised Britain's 'calm and courteous' forbearance under American brutishness as a sign of Britain's self-confidence and magnanimity.<sup>1020</sup>

In the Danish Duchies affair, sympathy with the German cause gave the *Saturday* a positive reason not to insist on a war for Britain's honour. In the American civil war there would have been no reason for war except for honour, and the *Saturday* advocated keeping the peace if at all possible. During the Black Sea affair, though, the *Saturday* argued for forceful action by Britain either to maintain the neutrality of the Black Sea or to secure a similar guarantee of Russian non-aggression. Still honour played no role, however. Where conservatives felt anxious over the affair's effect on the stature of Britain, and where Reeve worried over its effect on respect for public law, the *Saturday* only valued the substantive issue of 'checking the ambitious projects of Russia'.<sup>1021</sup>

The initial war-scare resulted in Russia's acquiescence to a conference to be held in London. Most conservative commentators presented this as a belated recognition of the relevance of British opinion, and concluded that British stature was secure, even if it had to concede some of its interests. The *Saturday*, in contrast, was primarily disappointed that its preferred alternative to Black Sea neutrality, general access to the sea for military vessels, was not even proposed at the conference. Everyone seemed

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Jun 29: 653); (1861, Oct 5: 339); (1861, Dec 28: 650); (1862, Jan 4: 2, 5-6); (1862, Mar 15: 285); (1862, Sep 20: 330); (1862, Oct 11: 445-6). Pace Bevington (1941: 72). See also Campbell (2003: 48-9).

<sup>1017</sup> *Saturday* (1864, Mar 5: 276). See also (1861, Nov 9: 445); (1862, Jan 4: 14); (1862, Jan 11: 29-30); (1873, May 2: 549).

<sup>1018</sup> *Saturday* (1861, Dec 7: 578, 580); (1861, Dec 28: 650); (1862, Jan 4: 1-2); (1862, Jan 11: 31-2).

<sup>1019</sup> *Saturday* (1863, May 2: 549-50); (1863, Jul 4: 6); (1865, Feb 11: 156); (1865, Oct 21: 502). These ships were Southern commerce raiders being constructed in British wharfs.

<sup>1020</sup> *Saturday* (1865, Oct 21: 501-2).

<sup>1021</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Nov 19: 641). See also *Saturday* (1870, Nov 19: 640); (1870, Nov 26: 670-1, 676-7); (1870, Dec 3: 700, 704); (1870, Dec 10: 732-3, 736).

more concerned 'to conceal a defeat', it grumbled, than to secure an alternative material guarantee against Russian aggrandisement.<sup>1022</sup> The *Saturday* did not think Britain's stature had really been at stake in the affair and would have preferred Britain to focus on the substance of the matter, which it did think grave, rather than on the observance of pleasing forms.

Conservatives often saw the honour or stature of Britain as being under threat in a particular episode of international affairs, enough so for them to advocate that Britain forcefully reassert its relevance, compelling the respect of foreign governments. The *Saturday*, however, never considered British stature to be under threat to the extent that it influenced the magazine's arguments for or against the use of force. The *Saturday* certainly valued the honour of Britain; it just did not think that this stature was placed in jeopardy by the occasional travails of diplomatic upheaval.

### **The *Saturday Review*, international law, and the principle of nationality**

The *Saturday* shared with conservative commentators a concern for order and stability among the great powers of Europe. Beyond that, though, its normative commitments were markedly different. The *Saturday* expressed a sympathy for national feeling, considered the sentiment of nationality reasonable and laudable, and envisioned a significant role for the principle of nationality in ordering Europe and providing stability to the continent. At the same time, it rejected the Treaty of Vienna and had little regard for international law as a way to order international politics.

#### International law and the Treaty of Vienna

The *Saturday* took the position that the course of international relations was determined by force and interests, not by treaties or respect for international law. Since the latter were not the drivers of international politics, the *Saturday* only gave them limited attention in its analyses of international affairs. And with international law only having a small possible role in constraining states, the *Saturday* considered that not much of value was lost in its non-observance. It consequently evinced little concern to maintain respect for international law, or indeed to let law and treaty constrain its policy advocacy.

The *Saturday* asserted that any ostensible influence of international law on

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<sup>1022</sup> *Saturday* (1871, Mar 25: 356). See also *Saturday* (1870, Dec 3: 704); (1870, Dec 10: 733); (1870, Dec 31: 820-1); (1871, Feb 18: 194).

international politics was really the influence of the threat of force.<sup>1023</sup> Considering the possibility of French aggression in the 1860s, for instance, the *Saturday* argued that 'neither Belgium nor the Rhine provinces possess any security against French greediness except the arms of the Great Powers who are interested in protecting their independence'.<sup>1024</sup> Even the relevance of the Treaty of Vienna settlement lay only in great powers being willing and able to use force in order to assert its provisions.<sup>1025</sup> Those great powers, the *Saturday* asserted, would enforce the observance of international law not based on ideals of right or justice, but only by consideration of their own self-interest.<sup>1026</sup> International law had consequently come 'to suit the circumstances of six or seven great States which are sufficiently powerful to be really independent'.<sup>1027</sup> Public law had nothing to do with notions of morality or justice. As a consequence, the *Saturday* argued, the demands of justice, and even of the general stability of Europe, were often at odds with the established precepts of international law. Moreover, justice and stability were more important than the observance of public law. '[M]oral and political expediency' lay for the *Saturday* in the principle of nationality and peace and stability of Europe.<sup>1028</sup>

The *Saturday* repeatedly advocated that established international law be ignored, in favour of such moral and political expediency. The *Saturday* did not care that events in Italy went against 'the pedantries of international law' and 'constitute[d] technical offences against the treaty rights of neutral Powers'.<sup>1029</sup> It was happy that for Italy 'the rules of law are set aside to leave room for the larger principles of natural justice'.<sup>1030</sup> The boons of Italian unification, in justice for the Italian people and stability for Europe, justified the illegal means used to effect it.<sup>1031</sup> When 'positive law' was in conflict with 'moral fitness', when treaties prevented the national self-determination of a people, then the demands of justice and stability outweighed the value of observing

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<sup>1023</sup> Broderick (1860, Jun 23: 803); *Saturday* (1855, Nov 24: 59); (1856, Mar 1: 334); (1858, Jun 19: 630); (1863, Dec 12: 746-7); (1864, Jan 9: 39-40); (1870, Oct 8: 446-7); (1878, Mar 2: 255); (1878, Mar 23: 351-2). Intriguingly, the noted legal scholars J.F. Stephen and Henry Maine were both major contributors to the *Saturday*. Unfortunately, none of their identified articles deals with international law, so it is difficult (and outside the scope of this thesis) to investigate the matter in depth.

<sup>1024</sup> *Saturday* (1860, Feb 18: 201).

<sup>1025</sup> *Saturday* (1860, Jan 7: 1).

<sup>1026</sup> *Saturday* (1862, Mar 15: 288); (1862, Mar 22: 318); (1863, Dec 19: 771); (1864, Jan 9: 39-40); (1870, Dec 3: 704); (1870, Dec 10: 736); Venables (1856, Jun 14: 145).

<sup>1027</sup> *Saturday* (1860, Jun 23: 810). See also *Saturday* (1863, Feb 21: 224).

<sup>1028</sup> *Saturday* (1860, Jun 23: 810).

<sup>1029</sup> *Saturday* (1859, Oct 22: 469).

<sup>1030</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Oct 6: 411). See also (1860, Oct 13: 443); (1860, Oct 20: 469); (1860, Nov 10: 573); (1860, Dec 22: 787).

<sup>1031</sup> Unless those means included a general European war. *Saturday* (1859, Feb 12: 172); (1859, Jun 23: 93-

international law.<sup>1032</sup> Discussing the Danish Duchies affair, the *Saturday* again asserted that 'legal rights must sometimes give way to political expediency'.<sup>1033</sup> The *Saturday* argued that the 1852 Treaty of London merely complicated the matter further by ignoring the 'wishes of the population'.<sup>1034</sup> On Poland, too, the *Saturday* advocated for Britain to ignore the strictures of international law and recognise the Polish government at the first possible opportunity, if genuine independence seemed possible.<sup>1035</sup> Established international law, the *Saturday* concluded, was incommensurable with the ends of stability and justice, and ought to be ignored in favour of the application of the principle of nationality.

In the cases of Italy, Poland, and the Danish Duchies the prescriptions of international law had been in conflict with what the *Saturday* understood as the course of moral and political expediency. Its rejection of international law was not, however, a mere issue of convenience. In both the Black Sea affair and the Eastern Question crisis of 1876-78, where an appeal to established treaties and respect for international law would have supported its position, the *Saturday* all but ignored international law, focusing instead on the effectual elements of interests and force. During the Black Sea affair, it drew attention not to Russia's treaty obligations or the state of respect for public law, but to Britain securing a material guarantee against Russian aggression.<sup>1036</sup> During the Eastern Question crisis, the *Saturday* trusted to the menace of Austrian and British hostility to bring Russia to the table, and, unlike conservatives, did not invoke Russia's treaty obligations as a reason for it to parley with the other great powers.<sup>1037</sup> The *Saturday* consequently did not even invoke respect for treaties for the purpose of furthering British interests – it was all but uninterested in involving international law in its analysis of international relations.

The one exception to the *Saturday*'s usual treatment of international law as a tangential irrelevance were the debates surrounding the American civil war. Here the

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4); (1859, Aug 6: 160).

<sup>1032</sup> *Saturday* (1866, Jun 16: 709). See also Broderick (1860, Jun 23: 803); *Saturday* (1860, Apr 21: 489); (1860, Jun 2: 698); (1866, Sep 15: 317); Venables (1856, Jun 14: 145); (1856, Oct 15: 537).

<sup>1033</sup> *Saturday* (1863, Nov 21: 661). See also (1861, Jan 12: 32); (1863, Oct 17: 506); (1863, Nov 21: 660); (1863, Nov 28: 691); (1863, Dec 5: 717);

<sup>1034</sup> *Saturday* (1864, Feb 13: 180). See also (1863, Dec 5: 717); (1863, Dec 12: 746-7); (1863, Dec 19: 772); (1864, Jan 23: 92, 103); (1864, Jul 9: 36-7).

<sup>1035</sup> *Saturday* (1863, Feb 28: 256)

<sup>1036</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Nov 19: 640-1); (1870, Nov 26: 671); (1870, Dec 3: 700); (1870, Dec 10: 732); (1871, Feb 18: 194); (1871, Mar 25: 356).

<sup>1037</sup> *Saturday* (1877, Dec 22: 755); (1878, Feb 23: 223); (1878, Mar 9: 287); (1878, Mar 16: 321-2); (1878, Mar 23: 351-2); (1878, Mar 30: 383-4); (1878, Apr 6: 413); (1878, May 18: 608); (1878, Jun 15: 739-40); (1878, Jul 6: 1); (1878, Jul 20: 66); (1878, Sep 7: 291-2).

*Saturday* did discuss the details of maritime international law and reflected on the conduct and policy which it prescribed for Britain and the North.<sup>1038</sup> It focused on the law, however, because this seemed the best way to avoid a war with the North. Through its focus on the legalities involved in the various disputes between Britain and the North, the *Saturday* tried to convince its readers that Britain's honour was not at stake, and that the issue could be resolved through the mere adherence of the North to the law's technicalities.<sup>1039</sup> No war to reassert Britain's honour was necessary.

Much like its general opinion of international law, the *Saturday* saw no value in the Treaty of Vienna, whether it were understood as Henry Reeve's foundation of the treaty system, or as the conservatives' rigid settlement of most extant potential conflicts. From the first years of its publication the *Saturday* was already dismissive of the Treaty of Vienna. During the Crimean War it encouraged its readers to expect the dissolution of the obsolete settlement.<sup>1040</sup> From 1859 onward, the *Saturday* argued that the Treaty of Vienna was not just obsolete, but positively deleterious. Across Europe, the *Saturday* asserted, 'the settlement of 1815 had wholly failed of its object', because it was based 'on very unsound principles' which did not recognise the moral and political salience of the principle of nationality.<sup>1041</sup> In ignoring the desire for self-determination among peoples, the Vienna settlement was both an injustice and ineffective in securing its stated aim of order and stability. By 1862 the *Saturday* expressed the hope that the dismantling of the Vienna system out of respect for people's 'national and political affinities' had finally become 'more or less reasonable and probable'.<sup>1042</sup> United Italy would be a better 'guarantee for peace', the *Saturday* argued, than the Vienna settlement of the peninsula.<sup>1043</sup> The Vienna settlement of Poland, too, needed to be dismissed and a new settlement reached which respected the Polish sentiment of nationality, their 'right of national existence'.<sup>1044</sup> Even Austria's instability and travails in the mid-1860s were the result, the *Saturday* argued, of the way it was revived at the Congress of Vienna, which had placed it fundamentally at odds with the sentiment of nationality.<sup>1045</sup> Not

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<sup>1038</sup> *Saturday* (1861, May 11: 462); (1861, Jun 8: 573); (1861, Nov 9: 445).

<sup>1039</sup> On the Trent affair, see *Saturday* (1861, Nov 30: 660); (1861, Dec 7: 578-80); (1861, Dec 28: 650); (1861, Dec 28: 654); (1862, Jan 4: 1); (1862, Jan 11: 31-2); (1875, Oct 21: 501-2). On the Alabama affair, see *Saturday* (1863, May 2: 549-50); (1863, Jul 4: 5-6); (1864, May 28: 644); (1865, Oct 21: 502). Compare also *Saturday* (1858, Jun 19: 630).

<sup>1040</sup> *Saturday* (1855, Dec 22: 130); (1856, Apr 5: 445).

<sup>1041</sup> *Saturday* (1862, May 17: 543) and (1861, Apr 13: 354). See also (1859, Sep 10: 297)

<sup>1042</sup> *Saturday* (1861, Apr 13: 354) and (1862, May 17: 543-4).

<sup>1043</sup> *Saturday* (1859, Sep 10: 297).

<sup>1044</sup> *Saturday* (1864, Mar 14: 324). See also (1863, Feb 21: 224); (1863, Jul 11: 40); (1863, Jul 25: 103); (1863, Oct 24: 543).

<sup>1045</sup> *Saturday* (1865, Aug 19: 226).

coincidentally, the *Saturday* also complained of British conservatives, who, much like the Vienna system, still did not recognise the moral and practical salience of the notion of nationality and who persisted in their support for the Vienna settlement.<sup>1046</sup>

#### The sentiment and principle of nationality

In British debates on the divisive international questions of the time, the *Saturday* regularly argued for the resolution of these issues through the application of the principle of nationality. It prescribed this solution as desirable both from a sense of justice and from a concern for the order and stability of Europe. 'The ideal map of the world', the *Saturday* declared, 'would exhibit just as many independent Governments as there are [nationalities]'.<sup>1047</sup> That was the theory. In practice, however, 'the modern theory of nationality ... consistently applied ... would break up almost every considerable European state'.<sup>1048</sup> The *Saturday* consequently proposed that the principle of nationality not be implemented stringently as the ordering principle of Europe. However, where there was instability and disorder already, the principle might as well be applied to put affairs on a just and stable footing. The *Saturday* also valued constitutional liberty, but consistently subsumed this cause in its commitment to the sentiment of nationality.<sup>1049</sup>

While the *Saturday* expressed sympathy for any people's sentiment of nationality, it only envisioned a minor role for Britain in the realisation of the principle. This was in contrast to those liberal and radical commentators who ascribed leadership of the cause to Britain, if generally in ideas and advocacy rather than action. In that latter distinction lay the rub. The *Saturday* assumed the primacy of force in international relations and consequently argued that ideas, morality, and enlightened opinion had little agency by themselves. The support of the powerful was needed to realise moral ends, as evident in the unifications of Italy and Germany, and if sufficient force was arranged against the sentiment of nationality, as happened to Poland, it would fail to triumph.<sup>1050</sup> If Britain wanted to influence the fortunes of national movements, it would have to threaten and possibly go to war to do so – which the *Saturday* generally argued against in all the following debates.

The *Saturday* advocated that the Italian Question be resolved through the

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<sup>1046</sup> *Saturday* (1862, May 17: 543).

<sup>1047</sup> *Saturday* (1862, May 17: 555).

<sup>1048</sup> *Saturday* (1865, Apr 15: 427).

<sup>1049</sup> In contrast to Reeve, above, who made the converse move.

<sup>1050</sup> See for a general reflection *Saturday* (1866, Jul 28: 97).



unification of Italy along the principle of nationality. It treated Italy as one national entity, presented Piedmont as representing the Italian nation, and located the foreign-domestic divide, in the perennial discussions on foreign intervention, as lying between the Italian peninsula and those countries outside.<sup>1051</sup> Conservative commentators, in contrast, saw the relevant boundaries as between the actual states, did not recognise an Italian national movement, and perceived Piedmont as a brazen aggressor. The *Saturday* explicitly criticised this conservative myopia, in which 'the nation were put out of sight, as having no concern in the change' and which 'could only perceive in the constitution of an Italian Kingdom the lawless aggrandisement of the Piedmontese dynasty'.<sup>1052</sup>

The *Saturday* endorsed the realisation of the principle of nationality for the Italian people as the most morally expedient solution to the Italian question, repeatedly characterising the Italian national cause as the cause of 'justice'.<sup>1053</sup> The *Saturday* also argued that unification was politically expedient, best for the order and stability of Europe. Firstly, as long as the 'spirit of Italian nationality' was not appeased, any settlement would 'be simply a temporary arrangement, pregnant with future confusion'.<sup>1054</sup> Secondly, an Italy fragmented in a set of small, weak states all but invited foreign intervention. Only when unified into one national kingdom would Italy be powerful enough to ward off foreign interference and 'steady the balance of power'.<sup>1055</sup> National unification was not only the just resolution of the Italian question, it was also the best choice from the lens of great power politics and the values of European order and stability.

The *Saturday* also recognised the value of constitutional liberty, but this commitment was subsumed normatively and causally in its concern for the national movement. Writing about Lombardy, Venables argued that its specific grievances related to misgovernment 'are but consequential evils dependent on the master grievance of a foreign occupation'.<sup>1056</sup> Where conservative commentators were only

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<sup>1051</sup> *Saturday* (1859, Jul 23: 93-4); (1859, Jul 30: 123); (1859, Aug 6: 160); (1859, Aug 27: 241); (1859, Sep 10: 297); (1859, Sep 24: 353); (1859, Nov 19: 597); (1859, Dec 24: 762); (1860, Jan 21: 67-8); (1860, May 12: 601); (1860, Nov 3: 542); (1862, May 17: 543) Venables (1856, Jun 14: 145).

<sup>1052</sup> *Saturday* (1862, May 17: 543).

<sup>1053</sup> *Saturday* (1859, Feb 12: 172); (1859, Jul 16: 62); (1859, Dec 17: 725). See also *Saturday* (1859, Jan 8: 29); (1859, Jun 11: 722); (1859, Jun 25: 767); (1859, Jul 23: 93-4); (1859, Jul 30: 122); (1859, Sep 17: 326); (1859, Oct 22: 469); (1860, Jun 2: 513); (1860, Sep 15: 335-6); (1860, Oct 6: 411); (1860, Dec 22: 787); (1861, Jan 5: 5); (1861, Apr 13: 354); (1862, May 17: 543, 555); Venables (1856, Oct 4: 495-6); (1859, Jun 18: 735).

<sup>1054</sup> *Saturday* (1859, Jun 25: 767). See also (1859, Sep 10: 297); (1860, Feb 4: 135); (1860, Jun 2: 513).

<sup>1055</sup> *Saturday* (1862, May 17: 543). See also *Saturday* (1859, Aug 27: 241); (1859, Sep 10: 297); (1859, Sep 17: 326); (1859, Oct 22: 469); (1859, Nov 5: 536); (1860, Mar 31: 390); (1860, May 26: 663); (1860, Oct 20: 474); (1862, May 17: 555).

<sup>1056</sup> Venables (1856, Oct 4: 496). See also, both on Italy and on national sentiment in general, *Saturday*

willing to consider maladministration as a legitimate complaint, rejecting any sentiment of nationality, the *Saturday* considered the thwarted sentiment of nationality as the grievance subsuming all others. Furthermore, the *Saturday* assumed that the realisation of national unification, under the auspices of Piedmont, would bring the realisation of constitutional liberty.<sup>1057</sup>

While the *Saturday* expressed respect for both the sentiment and the principle of nationality, it still argued that unification would only be realised if it were backed by sufficient force, rather than mere moral right. Piedmont would first need help from Britain or France to remove Austria from the peninsula, and could then only hope to unify Italy absent further intervention from France.<sup>1058</sup> The primacy of interests further constrained the cause. Britain was not to use force unless significant interests were under threat, and the realisation of a national movement, the *Saturday* generally opined, did not qualify.<sup>1059</sup> Reflecting on the unification afterwards, though, the *Saturday* ascribed success to the absence of foreign intervention – implying that force could have stopped unification – and ascribed the lack of intervention to great power politics, not the power of ideas, a shared sense of justice, or British moral exhortation.<sup>1060</sup>

In commenting on the Polish Question, the *Saturday* argued that the most just resolution of the unrest in Poland would be an independent Polish state, formed along the lines of the principle of nationality. It expressed support for the Polish cause and claimed to be 'anxious for the emancipation of the Poles' while condemning Russian policy as 'sins against Polish nationality and against natural justice'.<sup>1061</sup> Conservatives criticised Polish separatists because their subversive behaviour made it impossible for Russia to grant any liberties. The *Saturday* did not much mind this effect; it affirmed that pursuit of the cause of national independence trumped retaining the possibility of mere

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(1859, Mar 26: 366); (1859, Jun 25: 767); (1859, Sep 3: 271); (1860, Jun 2: 513); (1862, May 17: 554); (1863, Mar 14: 343).

<sup>1057</sup> *Saturday* (1858, Mar 27: 306-7); (1860, Jun 2: 698); (1860, Sep 1: 258); (1860, Oct 20: 469-70); (1860, Nov 3: 542); (1861, Jan 12: 30); Venables (1859, Jul 2: 7).

<sup>1058</sup> From late 1859 onwards, the *Saturday* considered French intervention the one remaining threat to the unification of Italy, and it heartily condemned Mazzini and the revolutionaries as inviting such intervention. *Saturday* (1858, Jun 19: 630); (1859, Apr 2: 390); (1859, Sep 10: 297); (1859, Oct 22: 470); (1859, Nov 19: 598); (1859, Dec 17: 725); (1859, Dec 24: 761); (1860, Jan 7: 1); (1860, Jan 21: 67-8); (1860, Feb 18: 202); (1860, May 12: 601); (1860, May 26: 663); (1860, Jun 2: 698); (1860, Oct 6: 410); (1860, Nov 24: 646); Venables (1856, Jun 14: 146); (1856, Oct 4: 495-6); (1856, Oct 18: 537); (1859, Jun 18: 735).

<sup>1059</sup> See e.g. *Saturday* (1859, Feb 12: 171).

<sup>1060</sup> The geopolitical calculation which had the autocratic powers deciding on non-interference was that Britain would disapprove; these states wanted to avoid British displeasure, since Britain was an essential part of their balance of power security against France. *Saturday* (1860, Sep 22: 347).

<sup>1061</sup> *Saturday* (1863, Mar 14: 341-2) and (1863, Apr 11: 461). See also (1863, Jul 11: 40-1); (1863, Aug 22: 238); (1863, Sep 19: 376-7); (1864, Feb 6: 155); (1864, Sep 3: 286).

constitutional liberty under foreign domination.<sup>1062</sup>

Poland had as strong a moral case for independence and for foreign assistance in this endeavour as any nation could have: 'if wars were waged for the disinterested maintenance of right, no cause would more indisputably justify a European crusade against the oppressor'.<sup>1063</sup> This consideration, however, could not trump the primacy of force and state self-interest in international affairs: 'Nevertheless', the *Saturday* continued, 'still stronger considerations require a nation, in almost all cases, to abstain from arms except in defence of its own interests or independence'.<sup>1064</sup> The national cause's only chance, the *Saturday* thought, lay in forceful intervention by France and Britain.<sup>1065</sup> It immediately argued, though, that Britain ought not to intervene – no interest compelled intervention, and likely French territorial aggrandisement into Germany as part of a European war was a compelling reason for Britain to oppose any foreign involvement.<sup>1066</sup> Poland lacked the lucky confluence of political circumstances which had allowed Italy to unify unhindered.

In discussing the rise of Prussia and unification of Germany, the *Saturday* placed the principle of nationality front and centre in its analysis. Commenting on the Danish Duchies affair, the *Saturday* noted that the existing mess of treaties and transnational obligations had made the question into 'a puzzling complication', and argued that instability and disorder would fester until the knot was cut by implementing the principle of nationality — which had the added attraction of being the morally prescribed solution, considering the 'justice of the case'.<sup>1067</sup> The *Saturday* also argued for the moral and political expediency of the unification of Germany in general. On the moral side, the realisation of the German people's sentiment of nationality was 'a truly wonderful event' and 'a gain to civilisation'.<sup>1068</sup> On the political side, unification also meant the creation of a major great power in the centre of Europe, where it was aptly placed to check the expansion of both France and Russia. United Germany, the *Saturday*

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<sup>1062</sup> *Saturday* (1863, Apr 11: 462); (1863, Jul 11: 40); (1863, Oct 24: 543); (1864, Mar 14: 324).

<sup>1063</sup> *Saturday* (1863, Feb 21: 223). See also (1863, Aug 22: 238); (1863, Oct 24: 543); (1864, Feb 6: 155).

<sup>1064</sup> *Saturday* (1863, Feb 21: 223).

<sup>1065</sup> *Saturday* (1863, Feb 21: 223). See also (1863, Feb 28: 255-6); (1863, Jul 11: 41); (1863, Sep 19: 376); (1863, Nov 14: 532-3); (1864, Feb 20: 255-6).

<sup>1066</sup> *Saturday* (1863, Feb 21: 223); (1863, Feb 28: 255-6); (1863, Apr 11: 461); (1863, Jul 11: 41); (1863, Jul 25: 104); (1863, Aug 8: 169-70); (1863, Aug 22: 238-9); (1863, Nov 14: 532-3); (1864, Feb 6: 155).

<sup>1067</sup> *Saturday* (1863, Nov 21: 660-1) and (1863, Nov 28: 691). See also (1863, Apr 4: 422-3); (1863, May 23: 645-6); (1863, Sep 12: 339-40); (1863, Oct 17: 506); (1863, Nov 21: 660-1); (1863, Nov 28: 691); (1863, Dec 5: 716-7); (1864, Jan 16: 65); (1864, Jan 23: 92, 103-4); (1864, Feb 6: 151); (1864, Feb 13: 180); (1864, May 21: 612); (1864, Jul 9: 36-7); (1864, Nov 5: 549); (1865, Apr 15: 427).

<sup>1068</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Jun 23: 98) and (1866, Aug 11: 156). See also (1870, Nov 26: 672); (1870, Dec 17: 773-4); (1876, Jan 29: 126).

argued, would be the stabilising influence in the centre of the continent which Austria had never managed to be.<sup>1069</sup>

The *Saturday* again subsumed the cause of constitutional liberty in its consideration of the sentiment of nationality, assuming that the realisation of national sentiment would go hand in hand with the advance of constitutional liberty. Prussia might be somewhat illiberal in its domestic government, the *Saturday* conceded, but the magazine expressed optimism that Bismarck and Prussia would have to adopt a programme of constitutional liberty in order to maintain Prussia, first as the leader of the German national movement, and later as the focal point of the unified German state.<sup>1070</sup>

The *Saturday* also again accorded a primary role to force and interest. Unification could only be 'attained', it argued, 'not by the progress of ideas, but by the rude Prussian method of blood and iron'.<sup>1071</sup> The forceful aggrandisement of Prussia was 'the indispensable condition of German unity', mere moral imperative would not do.<sup>1072</sup> Unification's main impediment, meanwhile, was a France which would look askance at the creation of a powerful neighbouring state and might decide to use force to pre-empt the possibility.<sup>1073</sup> Being committed to the unification of Germany, the *Saturday* consequently excused Prussian ambition and forceful aggrandisement, as in the wars of 1866 and 1870-1, exactly because it considered these necessary for Germany's national unification.<sup>1074</sup>

When considering the complications surrounding Italy, Poland, and Germany, the *Saturday* extolled the implementation of the principle of nationality as the perfect marriage between morality and expediency, promising, if force and interests would allow, a just and stable resolution to these perennial flashpoints in international affairs. When it came, however, to the most enduring thorn in the side of European order and stability, the Eastern Question and the restive European provinces of the Ottoman Empire, the *Saturday* rejected the suitability of applying the principle of nationality.

During the Crimean War, the *Saturday* had flirted with the idea of inciting

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<sup>1069</sup> *Saturday* (1864, Feb 27: 245); (1864, May 21: 613); (1864, Nov 5: 550); (1865, Apr 15: 426); (1865, Aug 19: 226); (1866, Apr 28: 488-9); (1866, Jul 28: 98); (1866, Aug 11: 155); (1866, Aug 25: 225); (1866, Sep 15: 317); (1870, Jul 16: 63); (1870, Sep 3: 290); (1870, Nov 26: 672); (1871, Mar 11: 294).

<sup>1070</sup> *Saturday* (1860, May 12: 594); (1861, Feb 2: 110-1); (1864, Feb 27: 244); (1865, May 13: 558); (1865, Oct 28: 537); (1866, Mar 17: 311-2); (1866, Apr 14: 429-30); (1866, Apr 28: 488-9); (1866, Jul 21: 63); (1866, Aug 11: 156); (1866, Oct 6: 408).

<sup>1071</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Sep 10: 322).

<sup>1072</sup> *Saturday* (1866, Sep 15: 317). See also (1866, Jul 21: 63); (1867, Aug 17: 224).

<sup>1073</sup> *Saturday* (1866, Mar 31: 368); (1866, Apr 7: 396); (1866, Aug 11: 155); (1866, Oct 6: 409); (1870, Jul 16: 63); (1870, Jul 30: 126-7).

nationalist rebellions inside Russia if such were necessary in order to compel Russian acquiescence to British peace terms.<sup>1075</sup> From 1876 to 1878, however, as Russia and Turkey waged war and the fate of the Ottoman Empire's European provinces was hotly debated in Britain, the *Saturday* argued against attempting to resolve the issue by use of the principle of nationality. In this case, it argued, implementation of the principle would bring neither justice nor stability to the area. Not only were the Slav, Turkic, and Greek races intermingled, but, more importantly, all territories contained mixed populations of Christians and Muslims. Any attempt to apply the principle of nationality, the *Saturday* argued, would result in a series of local civil wars between the Muslim and Christian populations, and a more harmful result it could not imagine.<sup>1076</sup> The best solution the *Saturday* perceived was rule by an empire, which could 'by means of military power, enforce on both parties [Christians and Muslims] order and peace'.<sup>1077</sup>

Conservatives thought of the principle of nationality as a cause of aggression and fount of disorder. They considered empire as an excellent source of stability and did not think an empire's subjects had any intrinsic cause for complaint, assuming an adequate quality of administration. The *Saturday* also valued stability, but took order anywhere it could be found. As long as stability was maintained, no country needed to be broken up in order to satisfy an abstract principle. The moment disorder had taken hold, however, it favoured a resolution of the issue through the principle of nationality, as providing both the most stable and most just result. The *Saturday* happily endorsed the unification of Italy and Germany along these lines, and lamented that Russia's overwhelming force precluded the principle's realisation for Poland. Only when this solution was impracticable, as it argued was the case for the Eastern Question, did the *Saturday* again envision a role for the old standby of empire.

### **The *Saturday Review*, Prussia, and the unification of Germany**

The *Saturday*'s position on Prussia and Germany – a support verging on the unconditional – was remarkable, a distinctive element of its perspective on international affairs. The *Saturday* consistently took the position that German unification was both

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<sup>1074</sup> *Saturday* (1865, Aug 5: 164); (1866, Mar 31: 368); (1866, Jul 21: 64); (1867, Aug 17: 224).

<sup>1075</sup> *Saturday* (1855, Dec 29: 146); Venables (1855, Dec 1: 73-4); (1855, Dec 8: 89-90); (1855, Dec 15: 106); (1855, Dec 22: 130); (1856, Jan 26: 223-4).

<sup>1076</sup> *Saturday* (1876, Apr 8: 448); (1876, May 27: 665); (1876, Aug 26: 247-8); (1878, Mar 16: 321).

<sup>1077</sup> *Saturday* (1876, May 27: 666). See also (1876, Apr 8: 448); (1876, Dec 16: 757-9); (1878, Aug 31: 262). Unfortunately for the provinces, the *Saturday* also noted, the Turkish administration was incapable, Russian domination would prove repressive, and Austrian rule, the best alternative of a bad bunch, was unlikely due to a lack of enthusiasm for the responsibility in Austria. *Saturday* (1876, May 27: 666); (1876,

morally and politically expedient – both just and a boon to the stability of Europe. Unification would further justice in realising the German sentiment of nationality, and stability in creating 'a strong central Power between France and Russia', which would provide a permanent check on their aggrandising policy and promised a stable balance of power in Europe.<sup>1078</sup> The *Saturday* was consequently a strong advocate of the Prussian position over the 1860s, from the Danish Duchies affair, via the Austro-Prussian war of 1866, to even the onerous peace terms of the Franco-Prussian war. Already in 1860 the *Saturday* expressed its hope that Prussia would follow the example of Piedmont, take up leadership of the German national and liberal cause, and effect the unification of Germany.

In its coverage of the Danish Duchies question, the supposed Danish repression of the population's sense of German nationality had the *Saturday* from the first supporting Prussian intervention in the affair: 'The Prussians are not only justified in using force', observed the *Saturday* in early 1861, 'but ... every friend of justice and humanity will be glad to see her act with vigour and promptitude'.<sup>1079</sup> Subsequent Danish concessions tempered the *Saturday*'s enthusiasm for war, but it reacted to the Austrian and Prussian invasion of Denmark with only muted complaints; while it considered the war a disproportionate measure, it also noted that this unjust action would lead to a desired and just result, in furthering the cause of German national unity.<sup>1080</sup>

In its commentary on the 1866 war between Austria and Prussia, the *Saturday* favoured Prussia, because the latter could possibly unify Germany, which Austria, not a purely German polity, could never do.<sup>1081</sup> Throughout the 1860s conservatives were alarmed by Prussian ambition and aggression. The *Saturday* in contrast felt sanguine about Prussia's exploits, secure in the knowledge that Prussia worked to establish a unified national Germany and predicting that Prussia's ambition would wane once united Germany had become a major great power.<sup>1082</sup>

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Nov 4: 554); (1877, Apr 7: 422); (1877, Jul 14: 31); (1877, Jul 28: 93); (1878, Jun 15: 739).

<sup>1078</sup> *Saturday* (1860, May 12: 594). See also *Saturday* (1863, Nov 28: 692); (1863, Dec 19: 772); (1864, Jan 2: 6); (1864, Jan 16: 65); (1864, Feb 13: 180); (1864, May 14: 577-8); (1864, May 21: 613); (1864, Jul 9: 37).

<sup>1079</sup> *Saturday* (1861, Jan 12: 32).

<sup>1080</sup> *Saturday* (1864, Jan 23: 92); (1864, Jan 30: 123-4); (1864, Feb 6: 151); (1864, Feb 13: 180-1); (1864, Feb 20: 210); (1864, Mar 5: 276).

<sup>1081</sup> *Saturday* (1865, Aug 5: 164); (1866, Mar 31: 368); (1866, Jul 21: 64); (1867, Aug 17: 224).

<sup>1082</sup> *Saturday* (1863, Nov 28: 691); (1865, May 13: 557); (1866, Jul 21: 64); (1866, Sep 15: 317); (1866, Oct 6: 409); (1867, Aug 17: 224).

On Prussia's ambition and the German project of national unification being inextricably interwoven, see *Saturday* (1863, May 23: 645-6); (1864, Feb 20: 211); (1864, May 21: 612); (1864, Nov 5: 549-50); (1865, Apr 15: 426); (1865, May 13: 557); (1865, Oct 21: 502); (1865, Oct 28: 537); (1866, Apr 7: 395); (1866,

The main blot on this happy picture was in fact France, with its unpleasant demeanour. The *Saturday* had reminded its readers of the French desire for territorial expansion throughout the 1860s: as a rationale for British inaction on the insurrection of Poland;<sup>1083</sup> in the context of the American civil war;<sup>1084</sup> in its discussion of the diplomacy surrounding the Danish Duchies affair;<sup>1085</sup> and finally, around the Austro-Prussian war of 1866, the *Saturday* feared that France, out of a sense of jealousy, would either attempt to conquer the German Rhine provinces or demand Prussian acquiescence in its annexation of Belgium.<sup>1086</sup> True to this perspective the *Saturday* followed most British commentators – but notably not the conservative ones – in characterising the Franco-Prussian war as one of unilateral French aggression against an innocent Germany, the latter fighting to hold on to its territory and to keep alive the promise of national unification.<sup>1087</sup> And whereas most liberal commentators turned their disapproval on Germany as it continued the war with the siege of Paris to compel the cession of Alsace and Lorraine, the *Saturday*, in contrast, staunchly defended the German cause throughout the conflict, to annexation and beyond. It consciously positioned itself as arguing for the German 'side of the case which ... seems just now to be the less popular'.<sup>1088</sup>

The *Saturday* argued that Britain ought to stay neutral and merely ensure that neither side would invade Belgium, as being all which British interests dictated.<sup>1089</sup> This attitude was however emphatically not an impartial neutrality. The *Saturday* characterised Prussia waging war at the head of a united Germany as 'a truly wonderful event'.<sup>1090</sup> The war had been caused by French aggression and Germany was throughout the conflict defending itself against this aggression. The *Saturday* consequently presented the siege of Paris and the demand for the cession of Alsace and Lorraine as part of Germany's defensive policy.

The *Saturday* firstly argued that only an emphatic defeat could make the French abandon their desire for aggrandisement – the French press kept prophesying victory

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Apr 28: 488-9); (1866, Jul 21: 63); (1866, Aug 11: 155); (1866, Aug 25: 225); (1866, Sep 15: 317).

<sup>1083</sup> *Saturday* (1863, Feb 28: 255); (1863, Jul 25: 104); (1863, Aug 8: 169); (1863, Aug 22: 238); (1863, Nov 14: 532-3); (1864, Feb 6: 155).

<sup>1084</sup> *Saturday* (1863, Oct 3: 446-7).

<sup>1085</sup> *Saturday* (1864, Feb 27: 244); (1864, Mar 5: 276); (1864, Jul 9: 36); (1864, Jul 30: 137); (1865, Oct 21: 502); (1865, Oct 28: 538).

<sup>1086</sup> *Saturday* (1866, Mar 31: 368); (1866, Apr 7: 396); (1866, Aug 11: 155); (1866, Oct 6: 409).

<sup>1087</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Jul 16: 63-4); (1870, Jul 23: 94-5); (1870, Jul 30: 126-7, 132); (1870, Aug 20: 222); (1870, Sep 3: 290); (1871, May 13: 587); (1871, Dec 9: 739).

<sup>1088</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Oct 8: 453).

<sup>1089</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Jul 23: 97-8); (1870, Jul 30: 127); (1871, Mar 11: 289).

<sup>1090</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Jul 23: 98).

over Germany, and only the cession of territory would drive home to the French their defeat, dispelling their delusions of annexing the Rhine provinces. Germany was consequently right, the *Saturday* asserted, to continue the war with the siege of Paris until France indeed adopted such a corrected perspective.<sup>1091</sup> The *Saturday* furthermore argued that the territorial cessions were necessary to guarantee Germany's military security. Only the German possession of several strategic fortresses in Alsace and Lorraine would provide a guarantee that France would not go to war with Germany in the future.<sup>1092</sup> In contrast to the *Saturday*, both conservative and liberal commentators in Britain generally denied that the annexations were justified from military necessity.<sup>1093</sup> The *Saturday* finally asserted that the annexations, as they were eventually implemented, adhered to this logic of military security, combined with a German commitment to the principle of nationality. The German peace terms were consequently no wanton aggrandisement, the *Saturday* implied, but rather understandable demands based on Germany's reasonable concern for its military security and commitment to the principle of a unified German nationality.<sup>1094</sup>

The moral aspect of the issue was, however, a problematic one for the *Saturday*. Even if the population was German-speaking, and considered by Germans as part of their nationality, the population itself was instead attached to its connection with France. The *Saturday* conceded that the annexations went against 'the right of the people to choose their own government'.<sup>1095</sup> It countered that the safety of Germany, even Europe, were in the balance. It also tried to salve the wound by opining that the Germans would do their best to make the populations a part of Germany – there would be little oppression, and likely effective assimilation in a generation or so.<sup>1096</sup> Nevertheless, the *Saturday* writers clearly had trouble themselves with their line of reasoning, and only their commitment to the 'wonderful event' of German unification seemed to sustain their advocacy for the German course of action.

Conservatives were worried at this point in time about the state of Europe. They saw the collapse of France, the unification of a powerful Germany, with unknown motives and a worrying alliance with France, and argued that Britain ought to take

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<sup>1091</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Jul 16: 63); (1870, Jul 30: 127); (1870, Sep 3: 290); (1870, Sep 10: 322-3); (1870, Oct 1: 413); (1870, Oct 8: 453-4); (1870, Oct 22: 509); (1870, Oct 29: 543-4); (1871, Feb 18: 194).

<sup>1092</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Aug 20: 222); (1870, Oct 1: 413); (1870, Oct 8: 453); (1870, Oct 22: 509-10); (1870, Oct 29: 544); (1871, Feb 4: 129); (1871, Mar 4: 257); (1871, Mar 11: 293); (1871, Dec 9: 739).

<sup>1093</sup> See e.g. Cecil (1870: 545).

<sup>1094</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Oct 8: 454); (1871, May 6: 553).

<sup>1095</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Oct 8: 454).

<sup>1096</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Oct 8: 454); (1870, Oct 22: 510); (1871, May 6: 553); (1871, Jun 10: 718).



preventative measures and organise a tacit coalition against a possible German bid for continental hegemony, thereby re-establishing a balance of power. The *Saturday* explicitly denied the need for such a policy.<sup>1097</sup> It too cared about the balance of power and recognised that France would be weakened for a while, but it thought that newly united Germany would ably fill the gap left behind by France, and form a check on Russia.<sup>1098</sup> It was wholly sanguine about the rise of Germany and in fact advocated a partnership between Britain and Germany: 'the true enduring interests of Germany and England are so very much the same that we cannot well avoid acting together'.<sup>1099</sup> Even the German-Russian partnership, which came to light early in 1871, did not concern the *Saturday*. It argued that the interests of Russia and Germany were too divergent for their momentary cooperation to persist and threaten British interests; Germany would, for instance, never allow Russia to conquer south-eastern Europe, or set in motion a pan-Slavonic programme.<sup>1100</sup>

The *Saturday* consequently contrasted markedly with both conservative commentators and with Reeve on how it perceived the state of European international relations by the early 1870s. Whereas Reeve saw the dawn of an age ruled by force and conflict rather than law and right, and whereas conservative commentators worried over the imbalance of power in Europe with the collapse of France and the rise of a powerful and possibly aggressive Germany, and over the diminished stature of Britain after its concession on the neutrality of the Black Sea, the *Saturday* predicted a period of peace and tranquillity. It argued that Germany, Austria, and Italy would all pursue a pacific policy, and that Russia, too, was for now focused on its internal development: 'Thus all Europe, from one cause or another, appears to want a space for breathing and an opportunity of working out in repose new problems or new ideas'.<sup>1101</sup> It seemed that, with Germany finally unified, the states of Europe were happily looking to domestic progress for national glory, all adopting a moderate, peaceful attitude in their international relations.

## Conclusion

The international political thought which informed the reflections on European affairs of contributors to the *Saturday* and of conservative commentators was similar on many

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<sup>1097</sup> *Saturday* (1871, Feb 18: 193).

<sup>1098</sup> *Saturday* (1870, Sep 3: 290); (1870, Nov 26: 672); (1870, Dec 3: 704-5).

<sup>1099</sup> *Saturday* (1871, Mar 11: 294).

<sup>1100</sup> *Saturday* (1871, Mar 11: 293); (1871, Dec 16: 771).

<sup>1101</sup> *Saturday* (1871, Sep 2: 295-6). See also (1870, Sep 3: 289).

basic points. The conservatives' understanding of the fundamental dynamics of international relations as determined by great power politics, the primacy of force and interests, and the concerns of stability and peace, was a conceptual scheme which they shared with the "hard-headed liberals" writing for the *Saturday*. Important distinctions between the positions and opinions of these two sets of commentators existed, however, and lay in two basic differences.

Firstly, the *Saturday's* contributors were more pragmatic: they saw little use for international law as an effective constraint on states, so they all but ignored it; they did not perceive British honour as being threatened by any particular adverse development in these decades' diplomacy, so they rejected calls by conservatives for Britain to forcefully assert itself for the sake of British honour; and they felt sanguine in advocating the application of the principle of nationality as a source of stability for Europe.

Conservative commentators disagreed with these assessments. While they had instrumental arguments for each of these positions, it is tempting also to suppose a different disposition. Their marked sensitivity to any slights on Britain's honour suggests that they were strongly invested in the prestige of Britain, and that they located this prestige in a general respect among the other states of Europe for the opinions and interests of Britain. For conservatives Britain's honour was caught up in its role as a European great power – not, say, in recognition of its prosperity and civilisation or of its role in the spread of liberal values.

Conservatives' invocations of international law were generally half-hearted, but still distinct from the *Saturday's* silence. At the same time, their understanding of the workings of international law was similar. Conservatives might not have considered international law, apart from the Vienna settlement, to be a whole lot more useful in constraining states than the *Saturday* did, but they still valued the system of law as a part of the established international order. Public law was an established institution of the international realm and conservatives consequently involved it in their analyses of international affairs.

Conservatives and the writers of the *Saturday* were most distinct on the notion of nationality. The *Saturday* expressed approval not only from a pragmatic sense that the principle of nationality would foster stability in Europe, but also from a normative commitment to the justice of the realisation of any sentiment of nationality existing

among a people.<sup>1102</sup> Conservatives rejected nationality on both counts; it would overthrow the existing order of Europe to address a grievance which they considered chimerical and unreasonable in the first place.

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<sup>1102</sup> The *Saturday's* writers were after all mostly drawn from the same cohort of young university graduates who got emotionally and intellectually caught up in the unification of Italy in the late 1850s. See e.g. Harvie (1976).

## Conclusion

Conservatives were generally galvanised to contribute to the various British debates on foreign policy discussed in this thesis by threats which they perceived either to Britain's interests or honour, or to the order and stability of Europe. They also worried about the increasing popular influence on foreign policy across Europe, especially when this took the form of a strident sentiment of nationality. Conservatives consequently emphasised the importance of a public being properly deferential to the judgement of its statesmen and warned of the dangers of politicians pandering to the passions of the people. In Britain in particular, they routinely decried the effects of liberal ideology on government policy, resulting most particularly in a perceived lack of funding for a military ill-prepared for war. What conservative commentators argued for, what their arguments promised, was not progress of some sort, but stability and order in Europe, with Britain at peace, its interests secure, while it was respected as one of the great powers of Europe.

Conservatives' focus on great power politics and statesmen rather than on nations and general populations, combined with their assumption that military force and countries' self-interest were the two phenomena central to understanding international affairs, strongly constrained what was normatively and causally significant for them. Small states, the subject populations of empires, and the domestic situations and configurations of states all held little interest, except when and where these influenced great power politics and the actions of statesmen. More generally, conservatives employed a normative narrative focused on stability and order, rather than on progress, with events significant in their buttressing or undermining this stability, rather than in furthering or retarding the advance of civilisation. These two fundamentally different lenses underlay much of the mutual frustration and incomprehension which liberal and conservative commentators displayed towards each other.

The main conceptual shift which conservatives had to deal with in these decades was occasioned by the demise of the Treaty of Vienna. This development initially alarmed many conservative commentators, who feared an international relations of unfettered force. However, their commitment to the notion of the balance of power allowed them to eventually envisage an orderly and stable Europe which rested no longer on one grand settlement, but on treaties codifying the settlements of individual disputes — treaties whose purchase was in the end buttressed by a balance of power in Europe. The main threat to the European order was now not a king desiring universal

dominion, but the transformative and normative force of the sentiment and the principle of nationality.

Conservative commentators could not cope very well with the burgeoning national sentiment across Europe. Some ignored it, others pointed to its dangers, but they could neither offer a similarly emotive alternative (merely an institutional patriotism and order and stability), nor seemingly quite comprehend the traction which the sentiment found among many populations. All they could do, in the end, was suggest ways in which to limit the adverse effects of such projects of nationality on the stability of Europe, through statesmen privileging and strongly asserting the balance of power as the fundamental ordering principle of European politics.

Conservatives are sometimes made out to be a throwback, isolated in the intellectual landscape, attached to the phenomena of yesterday, and with no intellectual connection to the more ‘vital’ strands of thought and opinion. More often, conservatives are implicitly assumed not to be representative of their time, as evinced by their being neglected in or even absent from putatively general accounts of the era’s thought. The direction of debate in Victorian Britain can indeed give this impression; in their writings the many varieties of liberals rarely directly engaged with conservative commentators, giving higher priority to establishing their variant as dominant within the sphere of liberal thought and politics. This thesis proves, however, that in its substance conservative international thought was in places interwoven with other contemporary strands of thought and opinion.

In the mid-Victorian intellectual landscape, as it pertained to debates on international affairs, the positions occupied by Henry Reeve and by the *Saturday Review* were relatively close to those of conservative commentators – they were often united in their disparagement of liberal and radical commentators such as Gladstone, Mill, Cobden, or Bright. Conservative thought was nevertheless distinct from even these close neighbours. The difference lay, however, in particular areas. Conservative commentators shared with Reeve a concern to preserve the Treaty of Vienna, if for different reasons, and a disapproval of the principle of nationality. The *Saturday*, in contrast, rejected international law in favour of the moral and political expediency of the principle of nationality. Conservatives and the *Saturday* shared a similar assumption regarding the primacy of force and interests. Reeve, in contrast, had a vision of progress for the international sphere where this dynamic would be supplanted by the rule of law and an enlightened attitude among states.

While having affinities to Whig and hard-headed liberal positions, the conservative body of thought formed a distinct part of the intellectual landscape. Conservatives had two particularly characteristic elements in their international thought. Their condemnation of the sentiment and principle of nationality as a mere fancy to be ignored and as a cause of conflict to be deplored distinguished them from other commentators in mid-Victorian Britain, who ranged from plain enthusiasm to Reeve's wary indifference. Their defence of British honour and prestige, too, set them apart, both in terms of where they understood this honour to lie and in how sensitive they were to any imagined slight. Conservatives' aversion to notions of progress, whether located in the establishment of the rule of international law or of the principle of nationality, and their particular understanding and valuation of British honour, meant that Whig and 'hard-headed' liberal positions, even while showing significant affinities, were not to be mistaken for conservative positions on international relations.

Conservative thought was also characteristic in its particular combination of elements more widely present in Victorian international thought. Broadly put, conservatives married a 'realist' conception of international politics, as being about great powers, force, interests, and order and stability, to a conservative sensibility, in a preference for the established institutions of the international sphere, the Vienna settlement, a treaty system resting on a balance of power, a Europe consisting of empires rather than nation-states, and a foreign policy set and conducted by statesmen rather than parliament or the people.

This was mostly a happy marriage – for example, statesmen and the balance of power had pride of place on both sides of the ledger – but as the *Saturday* showed, a mostly 'realist' understanding of the workings (if not the ends) of international relations could easily be part of a pragmatic perspective which would happily abandon certain established institutions which conservatives cherished. And conversely, Reeve showed that certain conservative impulses could exist together with a basic understanding of international relations which was highly 'idealist', focused on progress.

Conservative international thought in mid-Victorian Britain was consequently distinguished by its combination of a 'realist' understanding of the workings of international relations with a conservative attachment to its existing institutions and rejection of both new schemes of ordering international politics and new values by which to judge the worth of those orders.

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